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ANDREW HEWSON REVISITS THE HITS, FROM URIDIUM TO ZYNAPS

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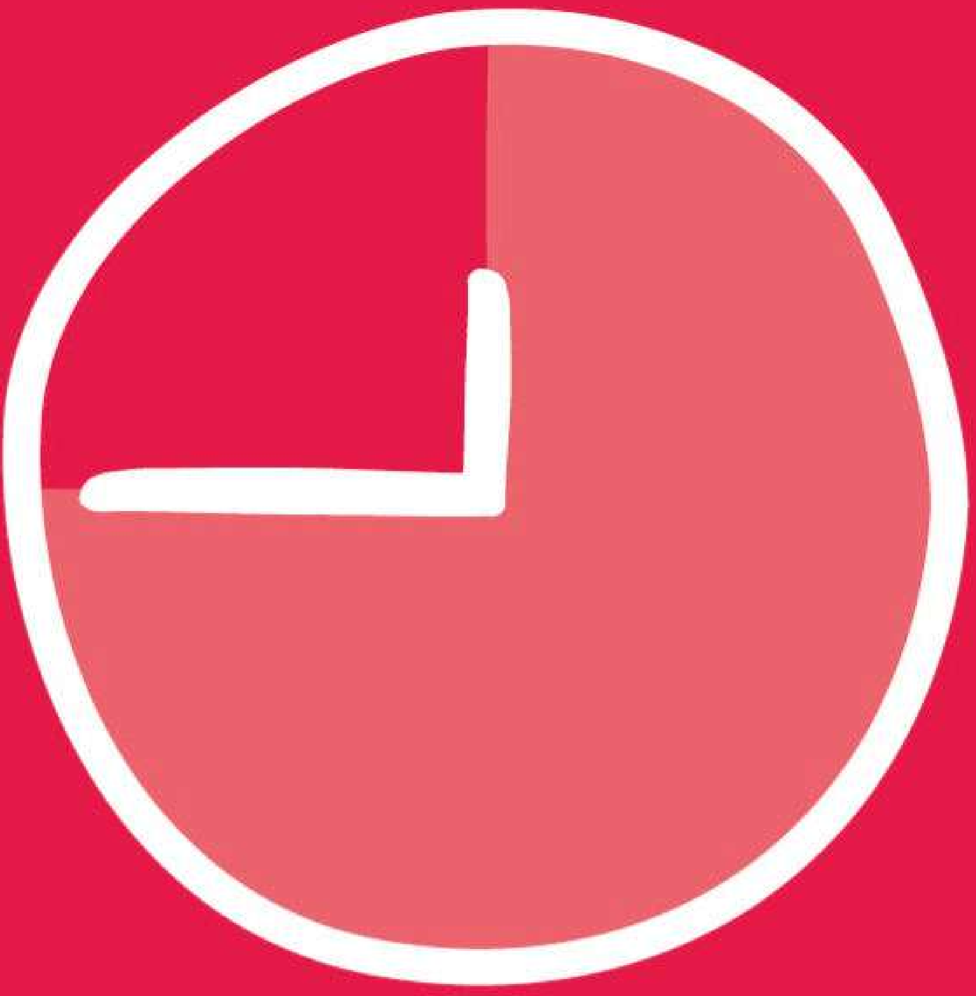

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES GAME?

DARRAN JONES

For me it's *Turtles In Time*. It builds on the craziness of the first arcade game and has a fantastic SNES conversion to boot.

Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!

Currently playing:
Lollipop Chainsaw

Favourite game of all time:
Strider

TIM EMPEY

I hired *Tournament Fighters* out of the video shop many times. Loved it, but didn't know about the other versions until many years later.

Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go

Currently playing:
Resident Evil 2

Favourite game of all time:
God Hand

NICK THORPE

It's not a nostalgic pick, but I've grown really fond of *The Manhattan Project* on NES. It's an awesome achievement on the 8-bit machine and plays really well.

Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III

Currently playing:
eFootball 2023

Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog

ANDY SALTER

I was a big fan of the cartoon series of the late-Eighties and early Nineties and the arcade machine is still impressive to this day.

Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!

Currently modding:
RTR: Imperium Surrectum

Favourite game of all time:
Rome: Total War although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now.

PAUL DRURY

My favourite turtle game is *Turtle Bridge* Game & Watch but if they have to be mutant and ninja, then the original arcade game.

Expertise: Spectrum *Pac-Man* clones

Currently playing: *Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration*

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space

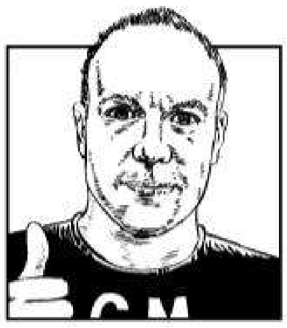
ANDREW FISHER

Konami's 1989 coin-op, particularly playing Donatello (the best turtle, no discussion is needed).

Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch

Currently playing:
Swoon: Earth Escape

Favourite game of all time:
Wizball



GRAEME MASON

The David Perry/Nick Bruty game from 1990 seemed impossibly colourful for the Speccy and I spent weeks playing it.

Expertise: Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver

Currently playing:
Halo Infinite

Favourite game of all time:
Resident Evil 4

RORY MILNE

It has to be the *Turtles In Time* coin-op. Its time-travel plot allows it to have completely over-the-top level designs, and it gets even crazier with four players.

Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing

Currently playing:
The Way Of The Exploding Fist

Favourite game of all time:
Tempest

ADAM BARNES

Definitely *TMNT: The Hyperstone Heist*. It was a thing of beauty thanks to the speed of the Mega Drive, the smooth animation, the slick music, the "pizza time". Just incredible.

Expertise: Being pretentious about coffee

Currently playing:
Marvel Snap

Favourite game of all time:
Baldur's Gate

LOADING...

I've never read a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comic in my life, but that doesn't mean I'm not aware of the exploits of Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael and Donatello. Even if you did consider yourself too old for the Turtles during the late-Eighties and early Nineties like I did, it was impossible to ignore the reptilian heroes because they were seeping into every aspect of mainstream media, from movies and cartoons, to toys and videogames.

Aside from watching the first *Turtles* film in 1990, my entire knowledge of Splinter's students comes from videogames, typically the ones that Konami produced. I loved *Turtles In Time* back in the day, and still own the Super Famicom cartridge version of it today. It has been fascinating then to talk to members of Digital Eclipse about not only this year's *The Cowabunga Collection*, but also why those early Konami games were such a big deal on their original release. We've even looked at the many *Turtles* games that followed, including this year's rather entertaining *Shredder's Revenge*.

But if the heroes in a half shell leave you cold, you'll still find plenty to enjoy this issue, including an extensive look at Hewson's back catalogue, the creation of *Alpha Centauri*, *Fightin' Spirit*, *1080° Snowboarding* and *Lego Star Wars*, the Ultimate Guide to Sabreman's first adventure and much, much more.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

retro GAMER
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
SNES

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Despite being one of the Amiga's best fighting games, *Fightin' Spirit* wasn't a knockout hit. Damiano Gerli finds out why

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Nick loves playing arcade conversions on his Mega Drive, and this hefty joystick certainly helps with that

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There are lots of different variations of the 3DO. Nick takes a brief look at this popular Panasonic model

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Paul Drury is our resident cheeky lad, so it makes sense that he unearths some of videogaming's dodgiest knock-offs

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It wasn't the first videogame based on Lego, but *Lego Star Wars* set the standard going forward. Here's how it happened

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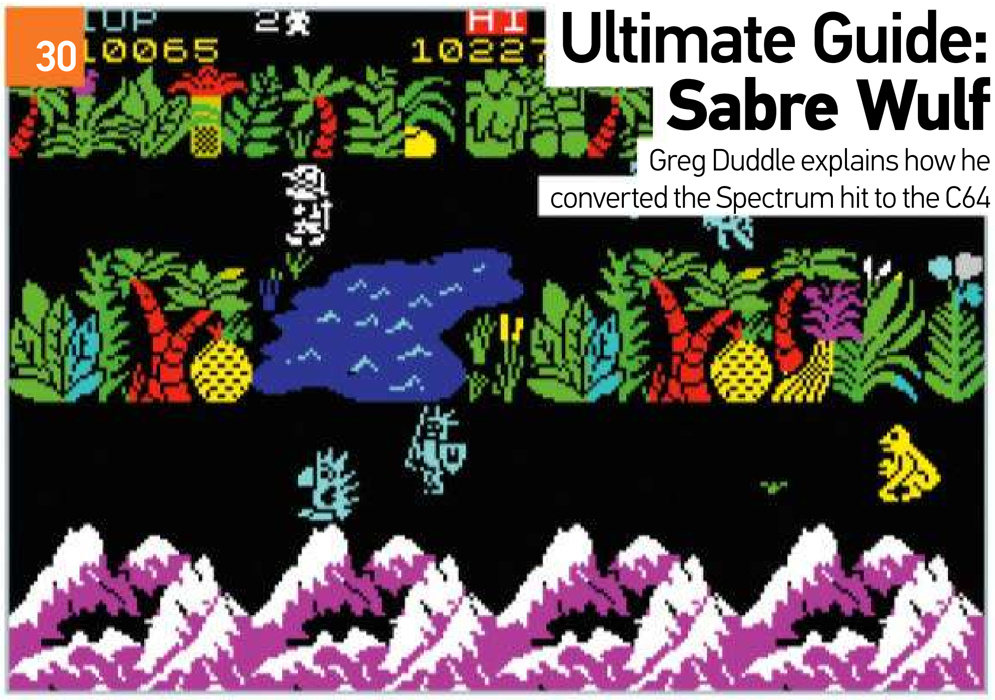
We chart the videogame success and failures of the heroes in a half shell and quiz Digital Eclipse on its *Cowabunga Collection*



Ultimate Guide: Sabre Wulf

Greg Duddle explains how he converted the Spectrum hit to the C64

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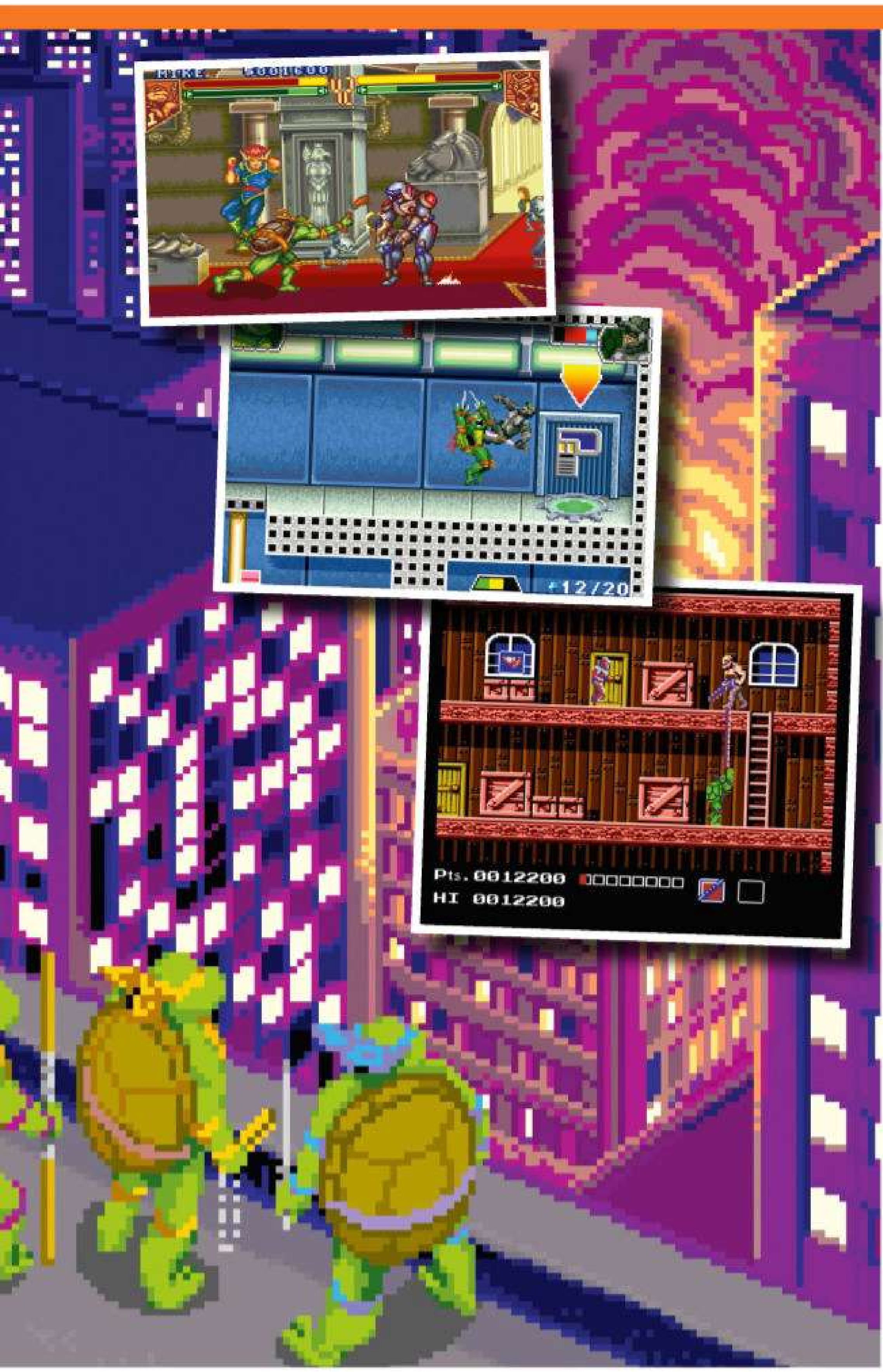

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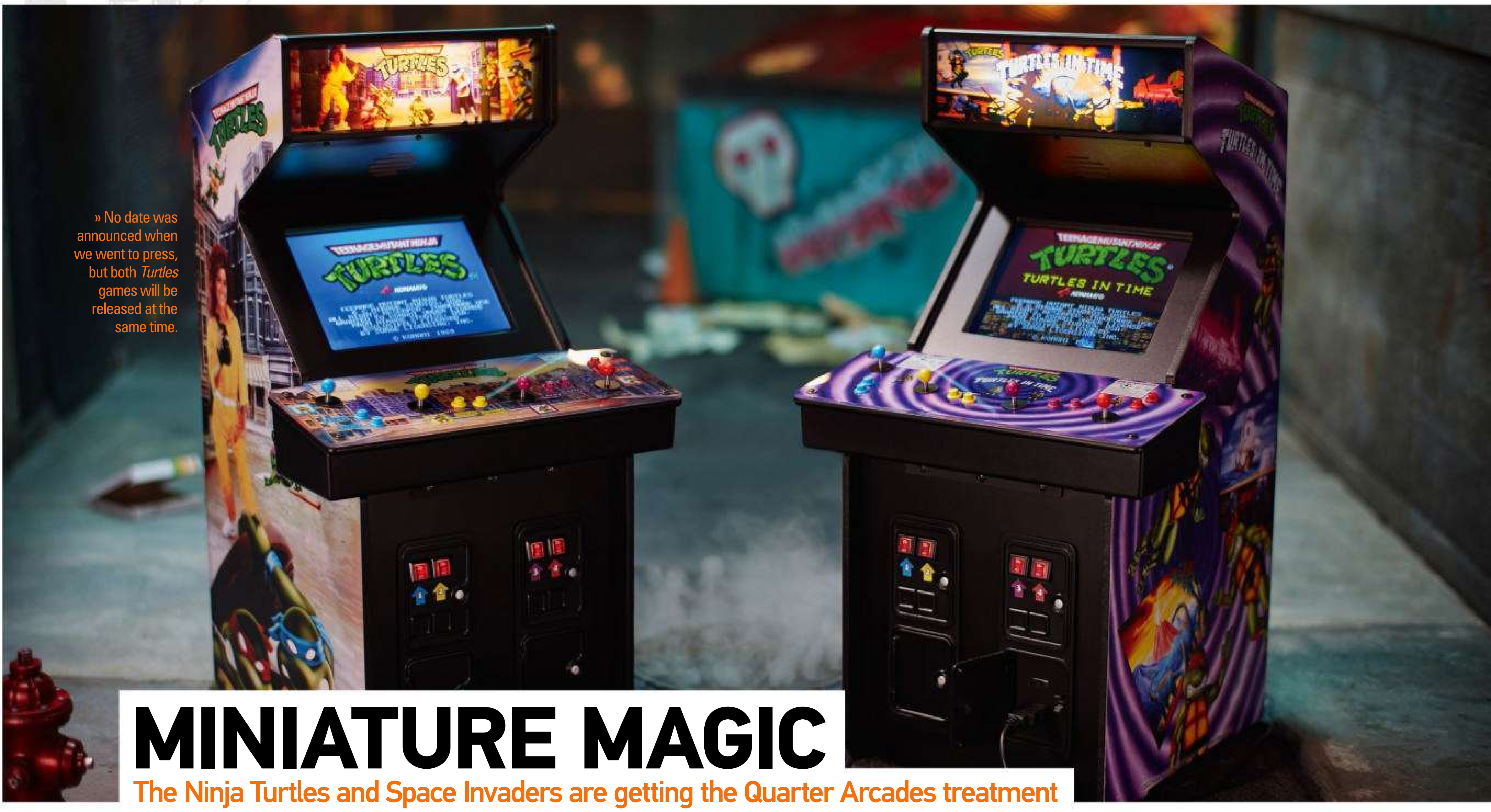

» No date was announced when we went to press, but both *Turtles* games will be released at the same time.

MINIATURE MAGIC

The Ninja Turtles and Space Invaders are getting the Quarter Arcades treatment

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Numskull Design's Karl Mizen on Quarter Arcades' incoming arcade cabinets based on *Space Invaders* and Konami's popular *TMNT games*

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We go behind the scenes of *Space Runaway*, a minigame that became a standalone release

14 BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES
Nick puts his foot on the throttle and powers his way to April 2006. What will he discover there?

If you've any interest in retro gaming you'll be well aware of Numskull Design's miniature arcade cabinets. Released under its Quarter Arcades label and designed using authentic arcade parts, numerous cabinets have been released, including Namco's *Pac-Man*, *Galaga* and *Dig Dug*, and Taito's *Bubble Bobble*.

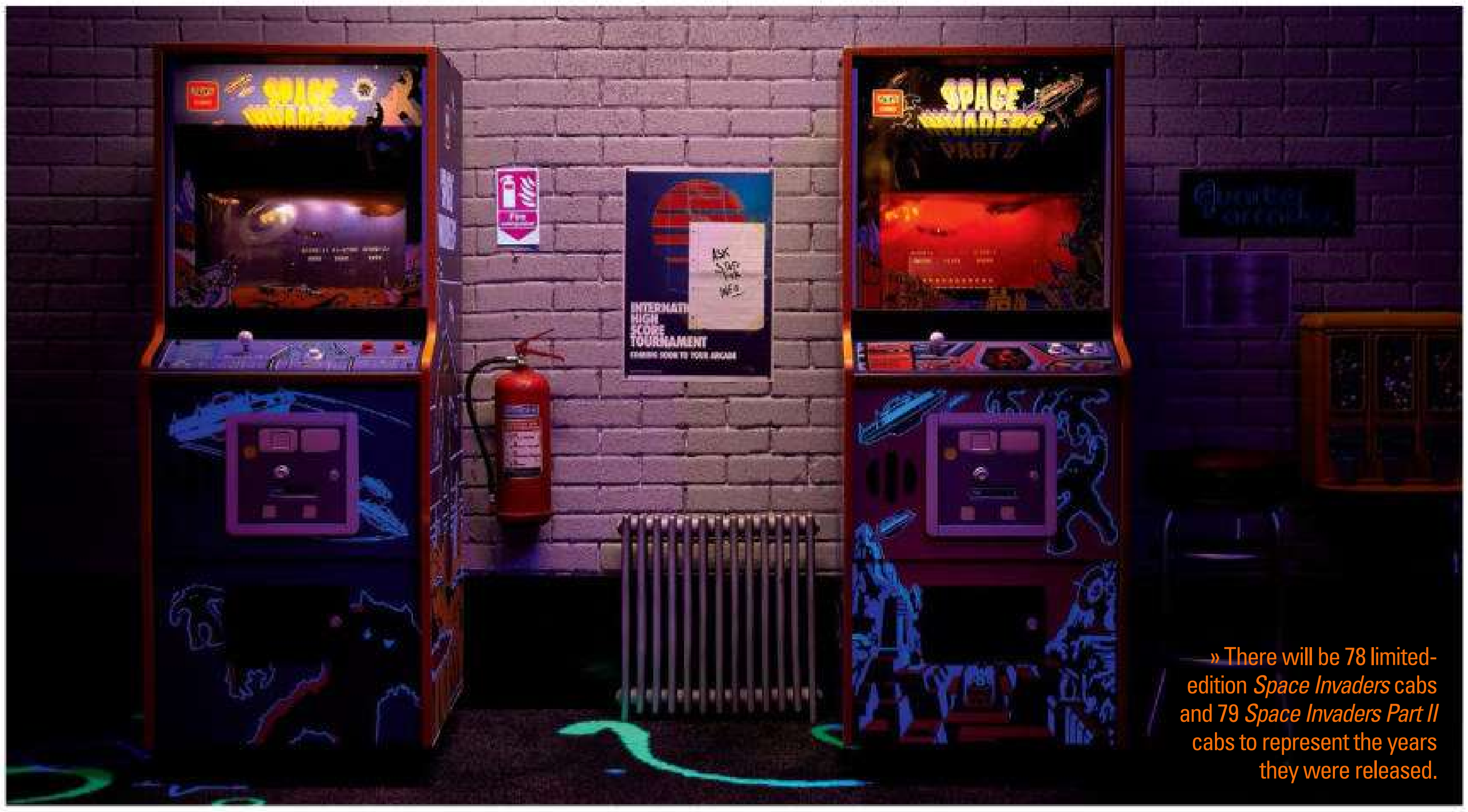
Back in issue 213 our Arcade Heaven article went behind the scenes of Quarter Arcades and mentioned incoming cabinets that included Taito's *Space Invaders* and Konami's *Track & Field*. Sadly, the pandemic meant both games didn't make their planned launch windows. "COVID threw a spanner in the works for Quarter Arcades and essentially ground us to a halt," admits Karl Mizen, Numskull Design's creative director. "Our design and initial development are carried out in-house in the UK. Still, we work closely with our manufacturing partners to get the technical aspects correct, which became impossible when COVID emerged. On top of this, COVID caused a global shortage in electronic components, which hit us hard."

» [Arcade] The addition of pads is a good idea because even the original arcade cabinet could feel crowded at times.

It would appear that Quarter Arcades is finally ready to move forward as it has recently put the long-awaited *Space Invaders* cabinet up for preorder along with *Space Invaders Part II*. Despite the time that has passed Karl is confident the machines will be worth the wait. "*Space Invaders* is a big machine, mainly due to its internal construction and positioning of the monitor," he says. "The machines boast highly detailed, iconic artwork, inside and out, and retain all of the features from previous devices, including an internal battery." The team has been working hard on making the cabs as authentic as possible, and as a result has spent a lot of time perfecting *Space Invaders*' Pepper's Ghost effect. "For those unfamiliar with the term, Pepper's Ghost is an illusion technique used in *Space Invaders* to project the gameplay in front of the starfield," explains Karl. "This is achieved by positioning the screen inside the cabinet and using an angled piece of glass to give the effect that the game is floating in front of you."

» Numskull Design's Karl Mizen is a big TMNT fan. "I loved the cartoon as a kid (I had every toy going), and it's great that my kids can still enjoy it today."

In a way the delay has worked in Quarter Arcades' favour as 2023 marks *Space Invaders*' 45th anniversary. As a result, limited editions will be available. "We're thrilled to offer a limited run of both versions signed by the creator himself, Tomohiro Nishikado," Karl says. "The machines will also come with an exclusive *Space Invaders* ¼-scale stool, collectors' coin, certificate of authenticity and unique postcard celebrating 45 years."



» There will be 78 limited-edition *Space Invaders* cabs and 79 *Space Invaders Part II* cabs to represent the years they were released.

> “We have a good relationship with Konami, so it seemed like a no-brainer”
> **KARL MIZEN**

Although *Track & Field* is currently on the backburner, Quarter Arcades hasn’t been idle and has been working alongside Konami to create authentic replicas of its *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Turtles In Time* cabinets. “We’re always looking to expand the range and offer a varied collection of cabinets,” Karl says proudly. “The four-player Konami cab is a great-looking machine, and we thought it would complement the current Quarter Arcades line-up very well. We have a good relationship with Konami, so it seemed like a no-brainer.”

It might seem like a no-brainer, but one thing that does concern us is how easy it will be for four players to jostle around the greatly reduced cabinet. “It can be a little crowded while playing four-player, but it is still surprisingly playable,” Karl offers. “These are the first machines where we have added an extra feature to allow for better gameplay, but not wanting to alter the aesthetics of the cabs, we were careful to make sure it was hidden.”

That extra feature Karl mentions comes in the form of hidden USB ports that allow external controllers to be hooked up to the machines. They’re accessed via the coin panels on the front of each machine and it sounds like a decent compromise for when things get too crowded.

The *Turtles* cabinets are significant for another reason as well, as the licensing isn’t as straightforward as with past cabinets, due to having to work with both Konami and the *Turtles* current owners. “It can be challenging, but we are lucky enough to work with ViacomCBS on other *Turtles* products,” explains Karl. “The main issues usually revolve around approvals and ensuring everyone is happy with the product before we go into mass production. In the case of *Turtles*, this involves ViacomCBS, Konami and Nickelodeon.”

That’s quite the hurdle to clear but it has happened, which makes us wonder if games like *Alien Vs Predator*, *The Punisher* or *The Simpsons* could appear in the future. For the moment though Karl and the rest of the team are looking forward and if the recent release of *TMNT* games like *Shredder’s Revenge* and *The Cowabunga Collection* is anything to go by, Quarter Arcade’s future looks very bright indeed. ✱

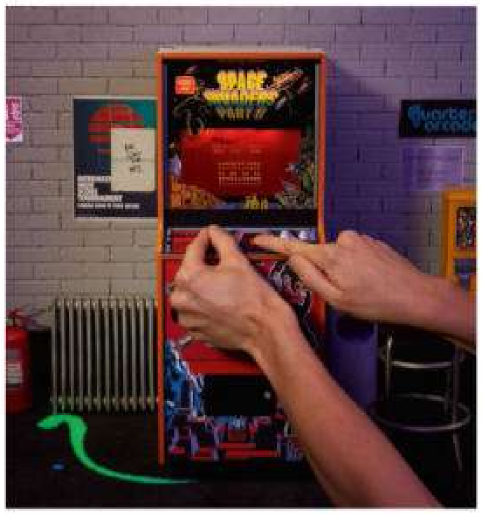
You can preorder *Space Invaders* and *Space Invaders Part II* by heading over to numskull.com/quarter-arcades

INSERT COINS
INSERT COINS
INSERT COINS

» [Arcade] “Seeing the original toys back on the shelves fills me with nostalgia, and I think our Quarter Arcades will do the same for many people,” Karl says about the incoming cabs.

SPACE INVADERS

» Quarter Arcades has gone to great pains with the *Space Invaders* cabs, including replicating the neat Pepper’s Ghost effect found on the machines.



» As you can see, the Quarter Arcades cabinets are significantly smaller than the coin-ops they are based on. There’s a nice range now available.

A CRASH SMASH!

Retro fans recently travelled to Walsall to take part in Fusion Retro Books’, Crash 2022 Live, a new yearly event in collaboration with Revival Retro Events and The Retro Computer Museum. Malcolm Evans, Clive Townsend and Kevin Toms were among the featured videogame celebrities, while our own Paul Drury was on interview and quiz duty. Over 50 Sinclair systems were available to play and there were plenty of other attractions as well.

GOLDEN JOYSTICK WINNERS

Zelda and *Monkey Island* were just some of the classic franchises that did well at this year’s Golden Joystick Awards. *The Legend Of Zelda: Tears Of The Kingdom* won Most Wanted Game, while *Return To Monkey Island* won PC Game Of The Year. *Final Fantasy XIV* received Best Game Community, while *Pokémon Legends: Arceus* nabbed Nintendo Game Of The Year. You can see all the other award winners by visiting bit.ly/goldenjoystick

40TH
ANNIVERSARY EDITION
GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS

Who is Iain Lee?

Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. Join him as he hosts a phone-in show and plays games at www.twitch.tv/iainlee and also check out www.patreon.com/iainandKatherine

Not everybody was kung fu fighting

Sometimes you can't go back. I'm really enjoying taking my two lads (11 and 13 in January, how did that happen?) to these retro arcades where you pay an entrance fee and get to play on all the machines for free. Wonderful stuff and my boys love it. Despite being *Minecraft*, *Gorilla Tag* and *Fortnite* addicts, they totally dig *Ms Pac-Man*, *Defender* and pinball tables. I also get a chance to show them my *Pac-Man* skills, which are decidedly average but in their eyes, I am a god.

This time we went to the Pixel Bunker in Milton Keynes. Absolutely fantastic (although I wasn't so impressed with the adjoining sci-fi museum) and a really lovely selection of games. As we wandered around, I no doubt bored the kids with tales of high scores, begging for ten-pence pieces and putting three-letter swear words into the hall of fame.

At one point I looked across the room and my heart started beating faster. Like seeing an old girlfriend across the room, I became all flustered. Except it wasn't a girl, it was *Kung-Fu Master*. I absolutely loved this when I was about nine. Even then I knew it was based on the insane Bruce Lee movie *The Game Of Death*. Dead simple premise. You walk along different levels of a tower and kick, punch and jump your way through the hordes of knife-throwing baddies. As soon as I saw it, I stopped playing *Dig Dug* and ran over to it. This was going to be fantastic! I haven't played it in 40 years. What fun! Except it wasn't fun. Firstly, it was a lot harder than I remember. I could barely get 30 seconds into it before I got done in. But even worse than that – it was boring. Slow, dull, it held my attention for approximately 90 seconds before I let out a heavy sigh and walked away from it, mid-game.

I felt bad doing that. Surely I owed it the respect of at least completing a level? It was *Kung-Fu Master* on freeplay. But I just couldn't face it. It was empty and so was I. Why was I so disappointed? Sure, a lot of the old games aren't as good as we remember them but they are still playable. *Defender* is a bit shonky now, but other games have aged rather well. Namco's *Pac-Mania*, the 3D *Pac-Man* game where you can jump is now ridiculously good fun. We were taking turns on that one for about 15 minutes. In fact, *Kung-Fu Master* was the only cab in that room that left me feeling a strange ennui.

Who knows why I felt like this. I didn't tell the kids about it, why should I? They probably wouldn't care let alone understand. Before we left, we did one last sweep of the arcade to make sure we had played everything we wanted to play. As the boys walked through the exit, I turned and looked at *Kung-Fu Master* and shook my head. It was like I was saying goodbye forever.

Those last two sentences read like the ramblings of a very sad old man. Which I think I may just be. *

> "A lot of the old games aren't as good as we remember them but they are still playable"

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Who is Paul Rose?

Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Loveless logos

What's the best gaming logo of all time? I'm talking about companies, hardware, all of that. For my money, nothing tops Atari. Aside from the iconic font, that second A – either meant to represent the game of *Pong*, or a pair of hands high-fiving a vase, depending on who you ask – has endured. Even now, almost 50 years later, it still feels futuristic to me.

We're very much in an era where games company branding is very corporate and sterile. Identity is faceless, generally wrapped up in crisp font, with maybe a hint of graphical flourish; Ubisoft, Sony, Microsoft, Electronic Arts, Epic Games. Dull, dull, dull.

I genuinely miss the days when games company logos made you smile. Remember all that airbrushed chrome? Ocean Software, Ultimate Play The Game, Psygnosis, Imagine, Elite and the Mega Drive all embraced the chrome look. Yes, it's dated by today's standards, where everything has to be representable in monochrome for branding purposes, but there was so much more character back then.

Addictive Games, who released Kevin Toms' *Football Manager*, literally had a lightning bolt striking through it. Arctic Computing – publisher of countless scarcely remembered ZX81 and ZX Spectrum games – had a logo that was written on the side of a cartoon lorry. The company responsible for *The Lords Of Midnight*, Beyond Software, showcased its creativity with a logo that rose up over a boiling sun.

At least Activision has remained consistent, keeping branding that highlights the T and the V, to look like some sort of swooping bird of prey. It's one of the rare logos that worked back then, and still works within the requirements of modern corporate branding. See also Capcom, Konami and Nintendo (though arguably all three were relatively ordinary to begin with).

Infogrames is now Atari SA, so it gets a pass due to Atari's sublime emblem, but its logo began life as a rainbow-striped armadillo – somewhat inexplicably – which got increasingly stylised over the years, before ending up as a vaguely armadillo-shaped squiggle. It could be seen as a metaphor for the declining creativity in games company branding.

Not all classic games company logos embraced the fun, admittedly. Perhaps because they were intended, at least, initially, as serious home-computing companies, both Sinclair and Commodore had pretty boring branding. Plus, I can't look at Commodore's stylised C without thinking it looks like a chicken's head.

Why has the fun gone from logos? Is it a sign of games 'growing up' – that the whole airbrushed chrome thing, and artistic fonts, were a bit too heavy metal? Did they conjure images of pasty young men in their bedrooms, their failing bodies trying to desperately absorb vitamin D from a flickering CRT? Certainly, there are elements within the games industry that are desperate to be taken seriously – but it's weird how the same hasn't happened with, say, the movie industry.

Dreamworks has a boy fishing from within a crescent moon. Paramount still has that mountain. Bad Robot has, well, a bad robot. I just think that branding should represent the product. Games remain as fun as they always were. Why haven't the logos done the same? *

ATARI

> "I genuinely miss the days when games company logos made you smile"

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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Space Runaway

Sergei Kolobashkin on meching a new Nineties-themed shmup

» Sergei Kolobashkin is the CEO of 110 Industries and has big plans for *Space Runaway*.

Some games start small and that's exactly what happened with *Space Runaway*, Soleil's excellent-looking mech-themed shoot-'em-up. Sergei Kolobashkin, CEO and creative director of 110 Industries, explains why the publisher decided to go big on its brand-new shoot-'em-up.

Where did the concept for *Space Runaway* originate?

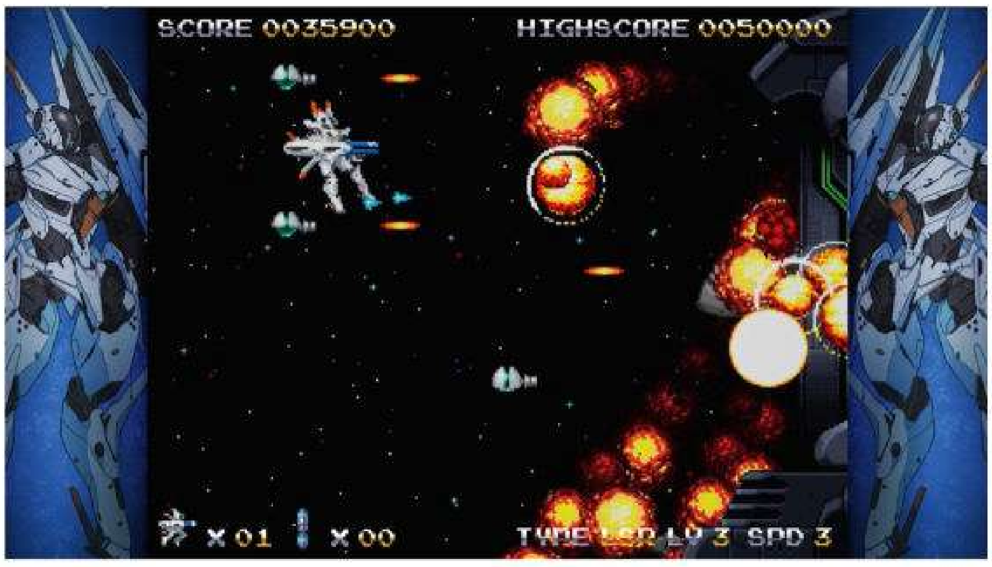
Wanted: Dead, our third-person action title created by some of the talent behind *Ninja Gaiden* that's releasing on Valentine's Day 2023 has a bunch of fun minigames in it. There are ramen-eating minigames, a rhythm action dance game and more. *Space Runaway* was another concept we had for a fun minigame, but it also came out of a desire to create an in-universe shooter that could have taken on a life of its own. It was very important for us that the game that would later become *Space Runaway* wasn't an imitation.

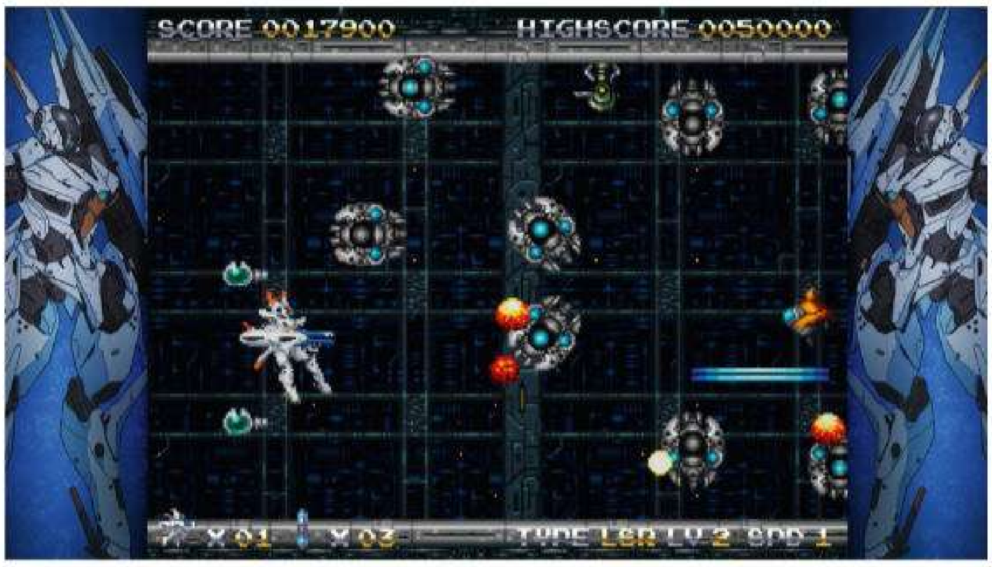
You mentioned it started off as part of another game. Why release it as a stand-alone product?

The original idea for *Space Runaway* was just to create one level but things quickly grew beyond that. We made a decision to release the game when we realised that we're making an actual game, not just one level. *Space Runaway* is still a component of *Wanted: Dead* and the players will be able to give it a spin when *Wanted: Dead* launches in February, but we decided to also release *Space Runaway* in December for free. Taking things to the next level is something you will see a lot with *Wanted: Dead*. One of the game's characters is a former TV chef and that led to us creating a cookbook and a cooking show that your readers can find on YouTube called *Vivienne's Late Night Chow*. Making a fully fledged Nineties-style shooter out of what was originally just supposed to be one level is the kind of thing we do. We always go all in!

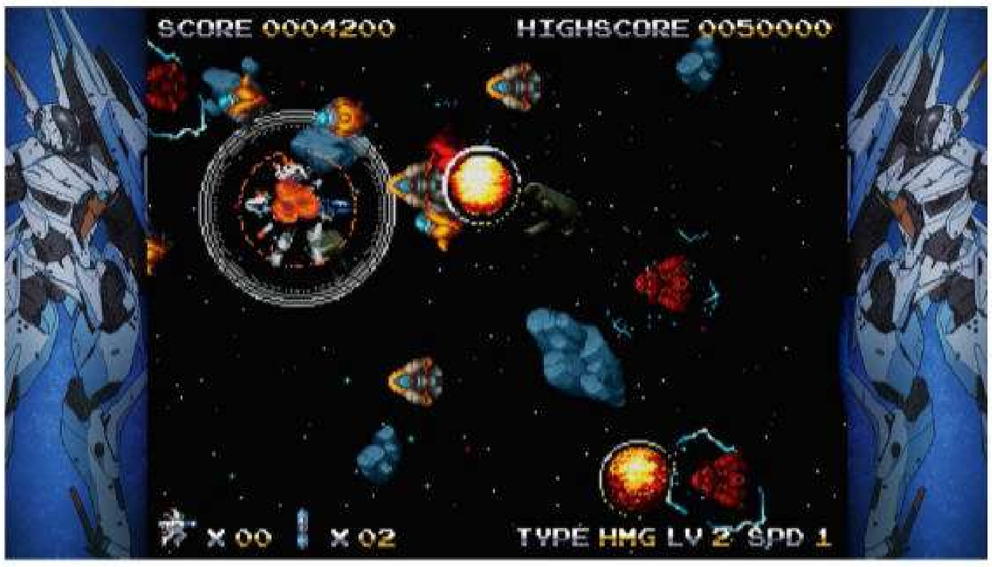
Why use a robot for the main character rather than a more traditional ship?

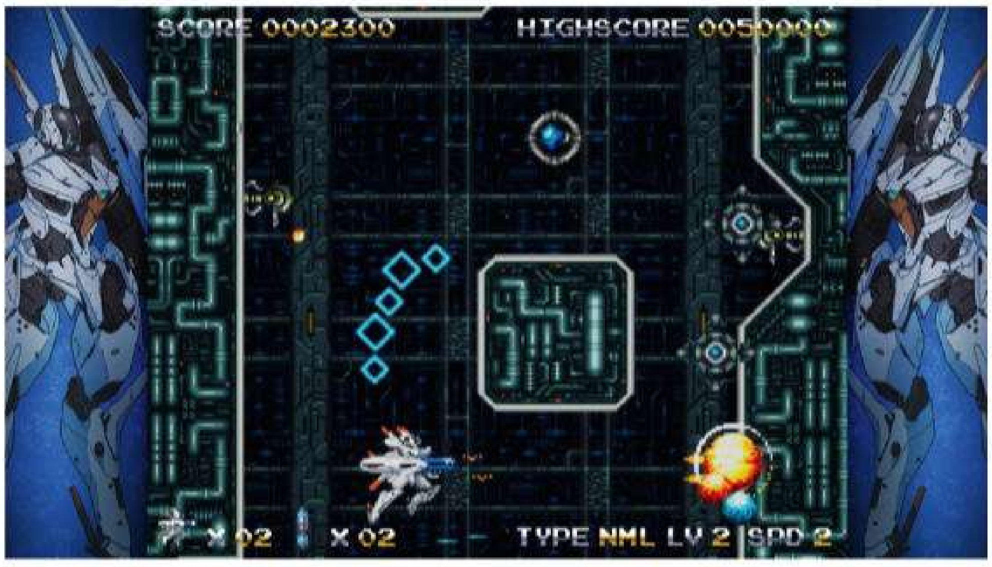
We picked the mech intentionally. *Space Runaway* is a fictional franchise in the world of *Wanted: Dead* – toys, comic books, anime, videogames. It's way harder to produce an animated show around a spaceship, wouldn't you agree? Stefanie Joosten



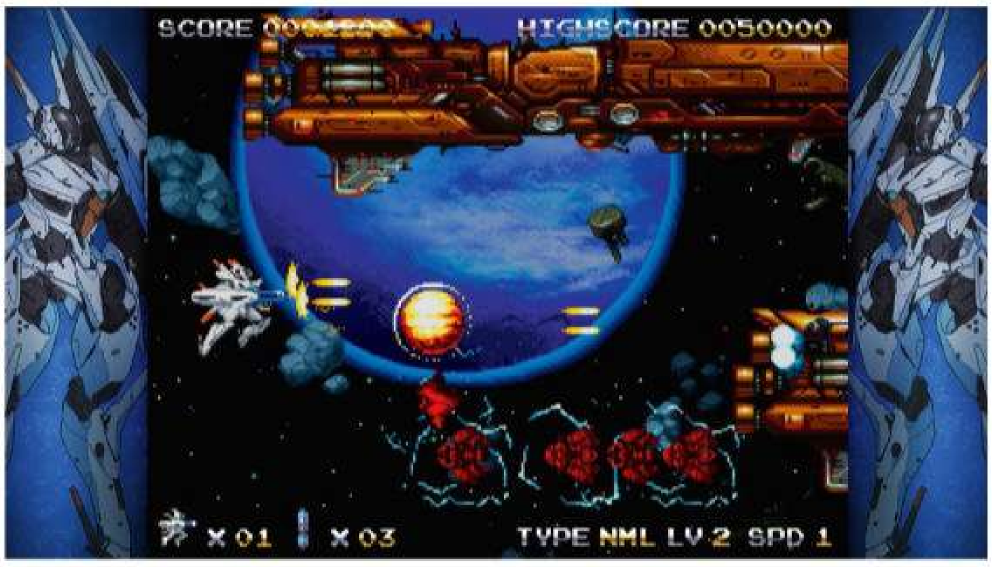


» [PC] Although *Space Runaway* isn't a bullet hell shmup it certainly gets quite tough at times.

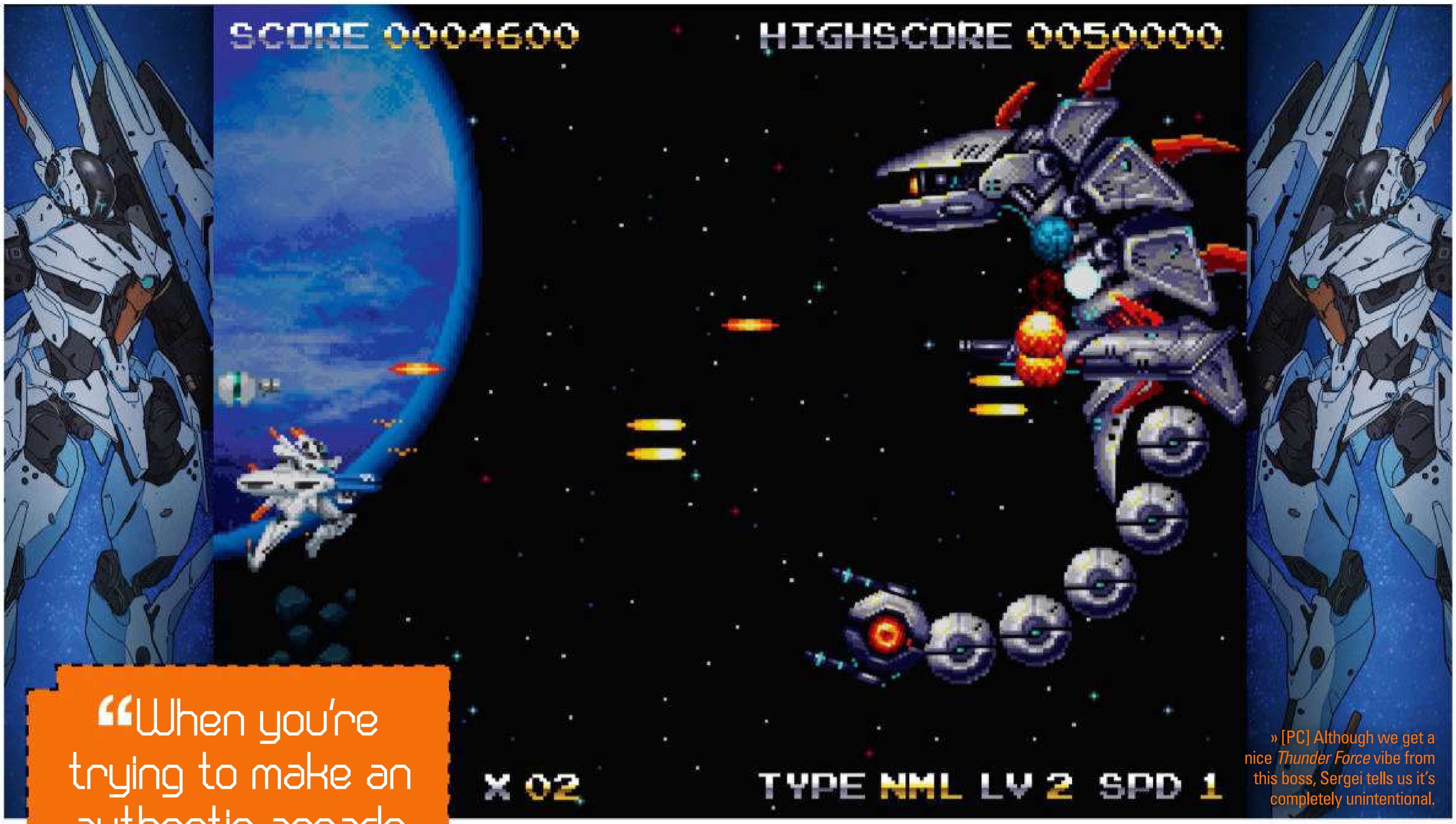




» [PC] While *Space Runaway* typically scrolls to the right, it occasionally scrolls upwards as well.



» [PC] When enemies die they stay on-screen. Stop firing and they'll detonate, destroying anything they come into contact with.



» [PC] Although we get a nice *Thunder Force* vibe from this boss, Sergei tells us it's completely unintentional.

> "When you're trying to make an authentic arcade experience, you don't want to disappoint the fans of the genre"
>
> **SERGEI KOLOBASHKIN**

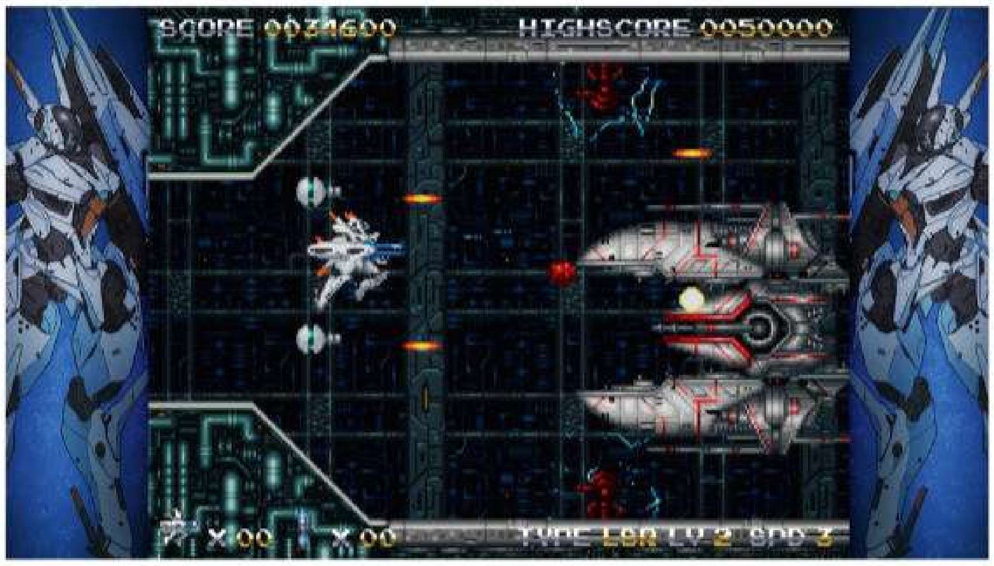
and Nelson Tai had a lot of fun designing the titular mech and I'm incredibly jealous that I wasn't around when they were putting this character together.

What games has *Space Runaway* been influenced by?
I'm a huge fan of *Android Assault: The Revenge Of Bari-Arm* on Sega CD. This game served as the main influence.

***Space Runaway*'s bosses share elements with bosses from *Gradius*, *Thunder Force* and other shooters of the era. Is this an intentional homage?**
This wasn't intentional. We were looking at the mech designs from the Eighties and Nineties and we drew a lot of inspiration from these sources. Zentradi-esque ships also make an appearance. Both *Gradius* and *Thunder Force* were inspired by the same source material. *Space Runaway* is quintessentially Nineties and I believe that we were able to achieve the look we were aiming for.

What aspects of *Space Runaway* have you found the most difficult?
The most challenging aspect of *Space Runaway* is just like with any other game in development – getting it right. We were aiming for a certain look and a certain feel. When you're trying to make an authentic arcade experience, you don't want to disappoint the fans of the genre. You want to meet the expectations of the fans and you want to make sure you deliver a great game.

The power-ups in *Space Runaway* are quite interesting. How much time and thought went into them?
All power-ups serve gameplay. We of course wanted to make sure players have a variety of different weapons to play with, but it's also about the challenge in front of you. The team has designed power-ups to give the player all the necessary tools they need to beat the game – it's tough to beat, so you need to become powerful to defeat what's in front of you.



» [PC] We love the style of *Space Runaway*. It's got some excellent-looking bosses to battle.

Input lag can make or break shmups like *Space Runaway*. How much effort is being put into reducing it?
The team at Soleil is incredibly talented – as I mentioned before, they include some of the team that worked on *Ninja Gaiden*, so precise controls are something they know all about! All I will say is I think you will be pleasantly surprised when you play it. [I was – Ed]

Why do you think the shoot-'em-up genre remains so popular?
Spaceship shooters, shoot-'em-ups and such are the most videogamey videogames. We've been playing these since the Seventies and some things don't really need to evolve to stay relevant. *Asteroids* is not contemporary by a long shot but is still fun as hell. *

***Space Runaway* should be available now. Look out for it at steampowered.com**

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

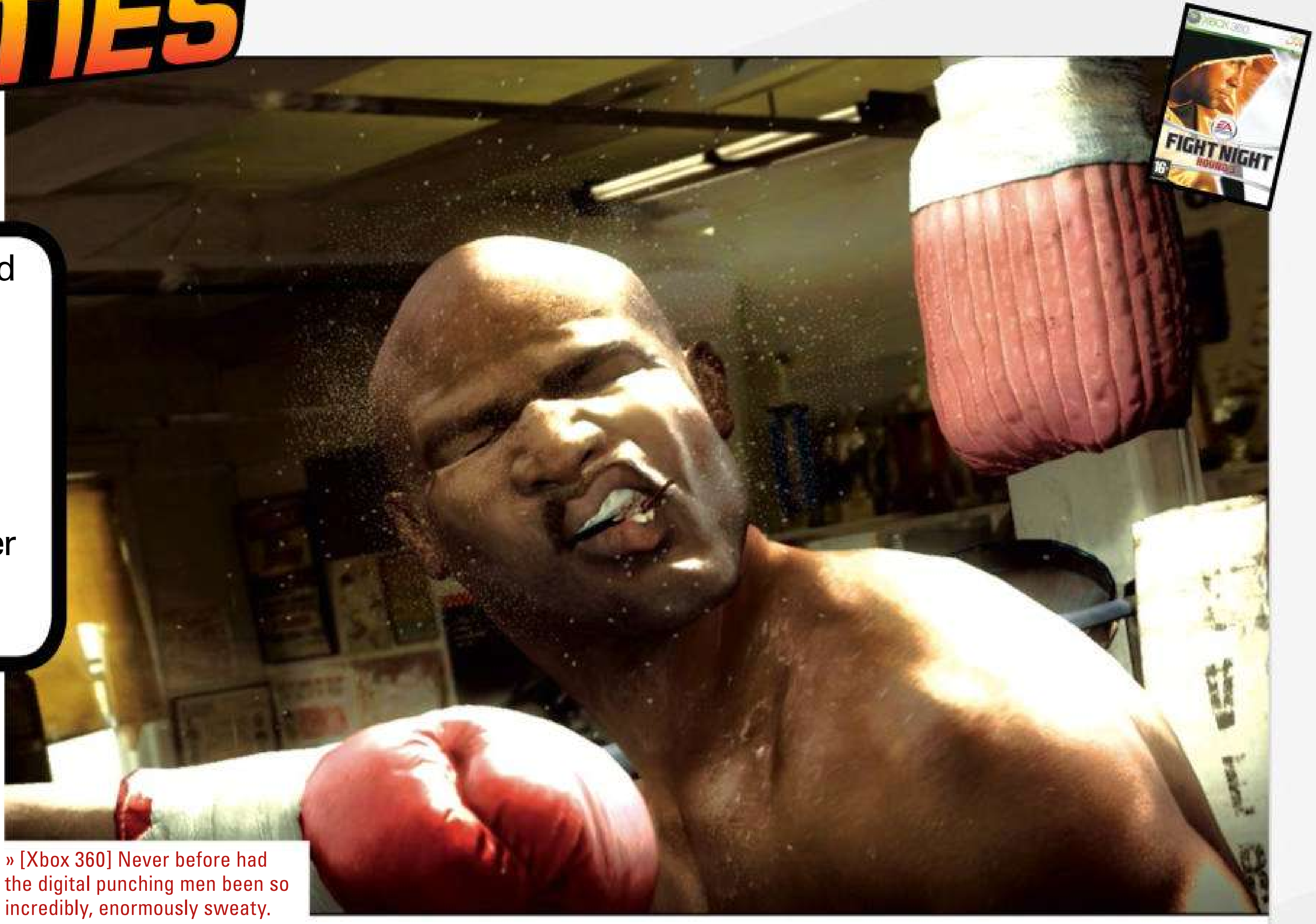
APRIL 2006 – An unexpected shower of games greets players this spring, from racing classics to pugilistic paradise, as well as some handheld oddities. Nick Thorpe is the man delivering your weather forecast from the not-too-distant past

NEWS APRIL 2006

The Italian general election, held on 9-10 April, was the subject of controversy after Romano Prodi's alliance The Union defeated incumbent Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's House Of Freedoms coalition by a razor-thin margin. Berlusconi refused to concede defeat and the battle eventually ended up at Italy's highest court, which ruled that Prodi had won by just 24,755 votes. This gave Prodi his second term, having previously served as Prime Minister from 1996-1998.

12.6 million people tuned in to see Mike Baldwin's final regular episode of *Coronation Street* on 14 April. The character, portrayed by Johnny Briggs for almost 30 years, had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease since late 2005. During his final appearance, he suffered a heart attack in the street and died in the arms of his long-term rival Ken Barlow.

An unsuccessful trip to Old Trafford on 22 April meant that Chelsea would be unable to claim the FA Cup, as the team was knocked out by Liverpool. One week later, Chelsea became Premier League champions after beating Manchester United 3-0, with José Mourinho's side becoming the fifth to earn back-to-back championships in the post-war era.



» [Xbox 360] Never before had the digital punching men been so incredibly, enormously sweaty.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 2006

There's nothing quite like a heavyweight main event, and EA certainly delivered one with *Fight Night: Round 3*. The flagship Xbox 360 version received 5/5 from *360*, 9/10 from *X-360*, 9/10 from *Official Xbox 360 Magazine*, 8/10 from *games™* and 8/10 from *Edge*. "The finest graphics ever seen, combat so deep that we're still stripping back layers some 100 fights in and drama that outshines most story-driven games – all wrapped up with classic EA high-production values and topped off with a lovely layer of sheen," said *X-360*'s review, summing up the overall mood. The game also scored well on the older formats, receiving 9/10 from *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, 8.7/10 from *Official Xbox Magazine* and 79% from *Play*.

Sumo Digital's handling of Sega's Ferraris was judged superb, as *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* received excellent reviews, including 91% from *Play* and 9.0/10 from *Official Xbox*. The former noted that "there's been nothing like it on PS2 before" and said that the arcade racer was "as pure a title as we could have ever hoped", while the latter appreciated that it was "beefed up with heaps more stuff" and "one of the most gorgeously colourful games ever". The PSP conversion was also acclaimed, receiving 93% from *Go Play* and 9/10 from *Official PS2*. *Edge* felt that although it was "a win for publisher, developer and expectant fans", the graphical fidelity ensured that "the framerate pays the toll" and scored it 8/10.

On the Xbox 360 and PC, *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* delivered fantastically entertaining RPG action. "This is a game that grabs you by the balls from the first fight until the demands of the real world snatch you back away," enthused *X-360*'s 9/10 review. Comparing experiences with another reviewer, *PC Gamer* noted that "in the first

CARLING LIVE
VIACOM
GUITAR HERO
PlayStation 2

Former **Retro Gamer** writer Luke Albigés does some *Guitar Hero* busking on the London Underground.

30 hours of play there was only a single quest that we both took on" and awarded the game 93%. *Galactic Civilizations II: Dread Lords* also impressed *PC Gamer*, earning 84% and being described as "brain-taxing" and "funny" but also "big, intimidating and not afraid to quote every work of science fiction you've ever read".

PS2 owners in the mood for a party would have been thrilled with *Guitar Hero*, which scored 92% in *Play* and 9/10 in *Official PS2*, the latter encouraging potential buyers that, "Even passing the one guitar around is brilliantly entertaining." *Onimusha: Dawn Of Dreams* also launched on PS2 this month. *Play* gave it 90% for a "combination of great visuals and a sweet combat system", but *Edge* felt that the game "takes so few risks that it's hard to imagine it appealing to new players" and awarded it 6/10. Elsewhere, *games™* gave it 8/10.

On the Xbox 360, tactical shooter *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* earned 9/10 scores from *games™*, *Official Xbox 360* and *X-360*, with *games™* recommending that players treat the solo campaign as "a training exercise for the real battle that lies ahead… that of Xbox Live multiplayer". *Official Xbox* also liked the last generation version, scoring it 9.0/10. First-person-shooter sequel *Far Cry Instincts: Evolution* scored 8.0/10 in *Official Xbox*, which felt it to be "a very competent expansion, albeit one that's way too brief". *Far Cry Instincts: Predator*, which bundled the two *Instincts* titles, got 4/5 from 360 and 6/10 from *X-360*, with both magazines decrying poor AI but disagreeing on the extent to which it undermined the game.

After an initial period of fairly light touchscreen experiments, the Nintendo DS finally started settling into its groove – one that was no less experimental, but offered rather meatier experiences. *Trauma Center: Under The Knife* by Atlus used the touchscreen to simulate, cutting, stitching and other surgical procedures, with the "clever, cute, frustrating, too bloody hard" game earning 77% from *NGC*. Those wishing to join another skilled profession could try *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*, which scored 82% in *NGC*. Capcom's point-and-click court drama was considered "thoroughly old-fashioned in many ways" but also "laugh-out-loud funny". You could also just move to a forest in *Animal Crossing: Wild World*, a social simulation sequel that earned 92% from *NGC* because "despite its familiarity, this retains the ability to charm your socks off."

That was all very jolly, wasn't it? Join us again next time, when we're sure to bring you more of this kind of cross-generation fun. *

» [Xbox 360] Getting into a sword fight with a vampire is stupid. Just go buy some garlic, dummy.

» [DS] Seriously though, what kind of town doesn't have apples? That's a dreadful state of affairs.

Time
79
Score
0352870
SEGA
268
» [Xbox] Reviewers this month really wanted you to play *OutRun 2006*. You all went and bought it, right? [I did - Ed]

Attack
Fighting...
Regroup
Paul Smith
Soldier
GHOST RECON
» [Xbox 360] Even when your combat gear is glitchy, it still helpfully highlights the baddies in red.

CHARTS

APRIL 2006

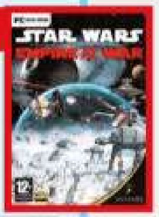
PLAYSTATION 2

1 – Black (EA)
2 – TOCA Race Driver 3 (Codemasters)
3 – Shadow Of The Colossus (Sony)
4 – Torino 2006 (Take Two)
5 – Rugby 06 (EA)

XBOX 360

1 – Call Of Duty 2 (Activision)
2 – Dead Or Alive 4 (Tecmo)
3 – Project Gotham Racing 3 (Microsoft)
4 – Perfect Dark Zero (Microsoft)
5 – Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter (EA)

PC

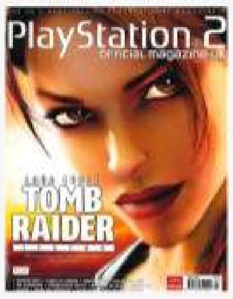


1 – Star Wars: Empire At War (LucasArts)
2 – Football Manager 2006 (Sega)
3 – The Sims 2 (EA)
4 – Command & Conquer: The First Decade (EA)
5 – Age Of Empires III (Microsoft)

MUSIC

1 – Crazy (Gnarls Barkley)
2 – No Promises (Shayne Ward)
3 – One (Mary J Blige & U2)
4 – No Tomorrow (Orson)
5 – SOS (Rihanna)

THIS MONTH IN…



Official PlayStation 2 Magazine

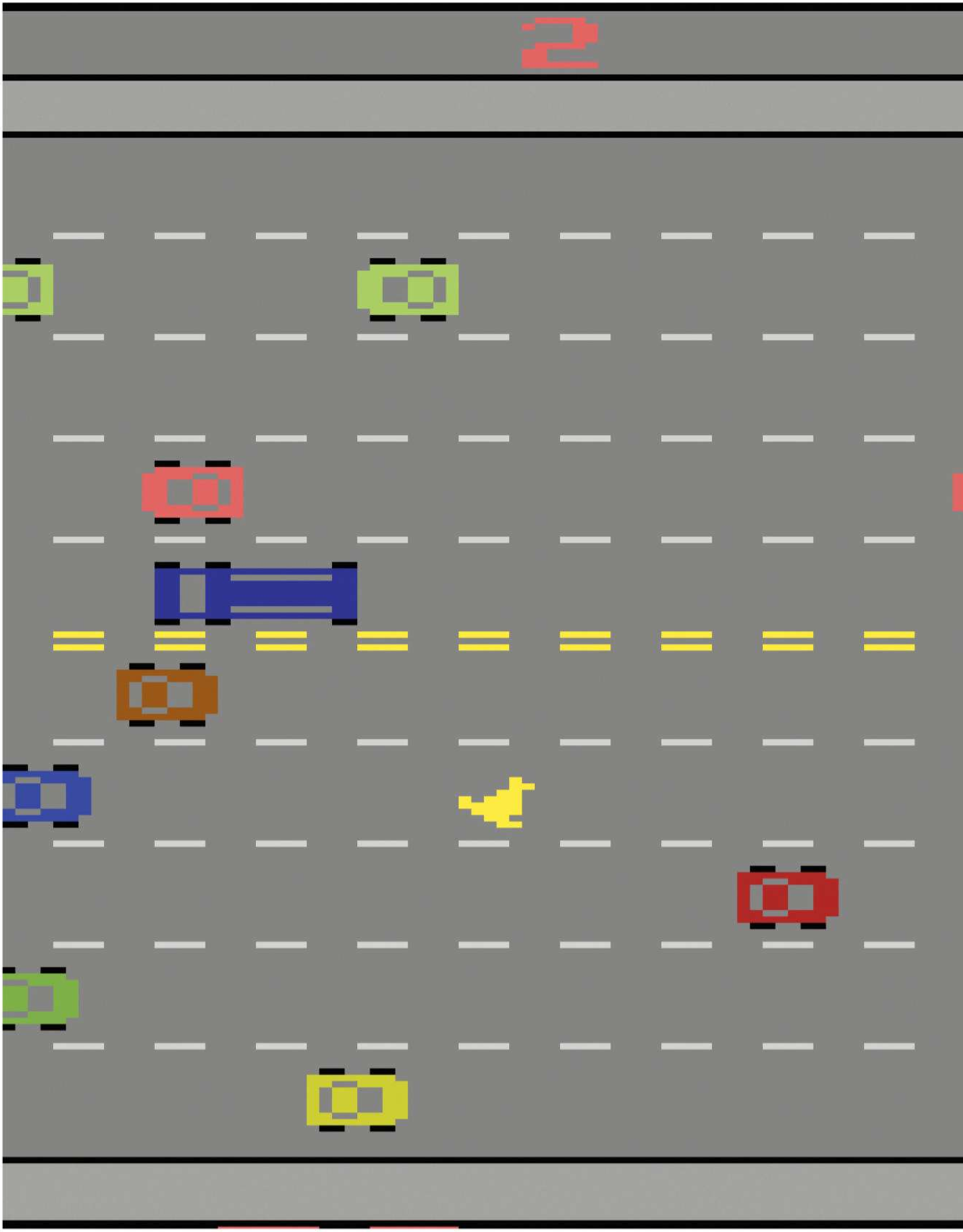
"There's *Resi 4 Special Edition*, for 20 pounds. I'm shocked but I buy it," writes reader Izzy Kirby. "Why are these amazing gaming masterpieces not valued as they should be?" Hopefully they like today's £70 prices.

Official Xbox 360 Magazine

"I for one think LAN play blows online out of the water," writes reader Lord M Gaymer. "I know you need more consoles, TVs and copies of the game, but being able to see each other as you fight to the death is priceless."

NGC

The canned N64 RPG *Mother 3* has resurfaced as a Game Boy Advance game. "The UK and US are still waiting to hear if the game known as *Earthbound* in the West will ever surface." Don't hold your breath, chaps.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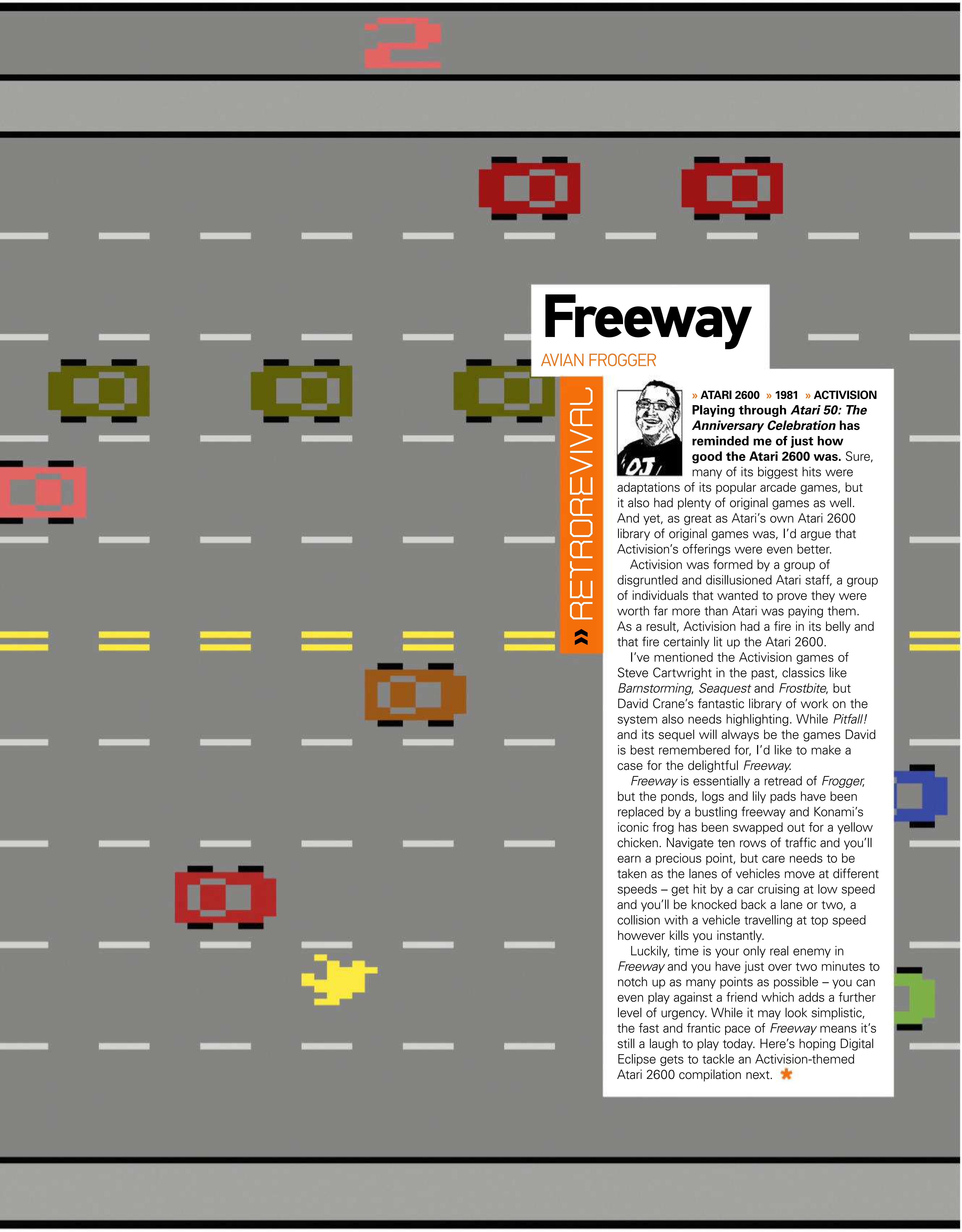


Freeway

AVIAN FROGGER

» ATARI 2600 » 1981 » ACTIVISION

Playing through *Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration* has reminded me of just how good the Atari 2600 was. Sure, many of its biggest hits were adaptations of its popular arcade games, but it also had plenty of original games as well. And yet, as great as Atari's own Atari 2600 library of original games was, I'd argue that Activision's offerings were even better.

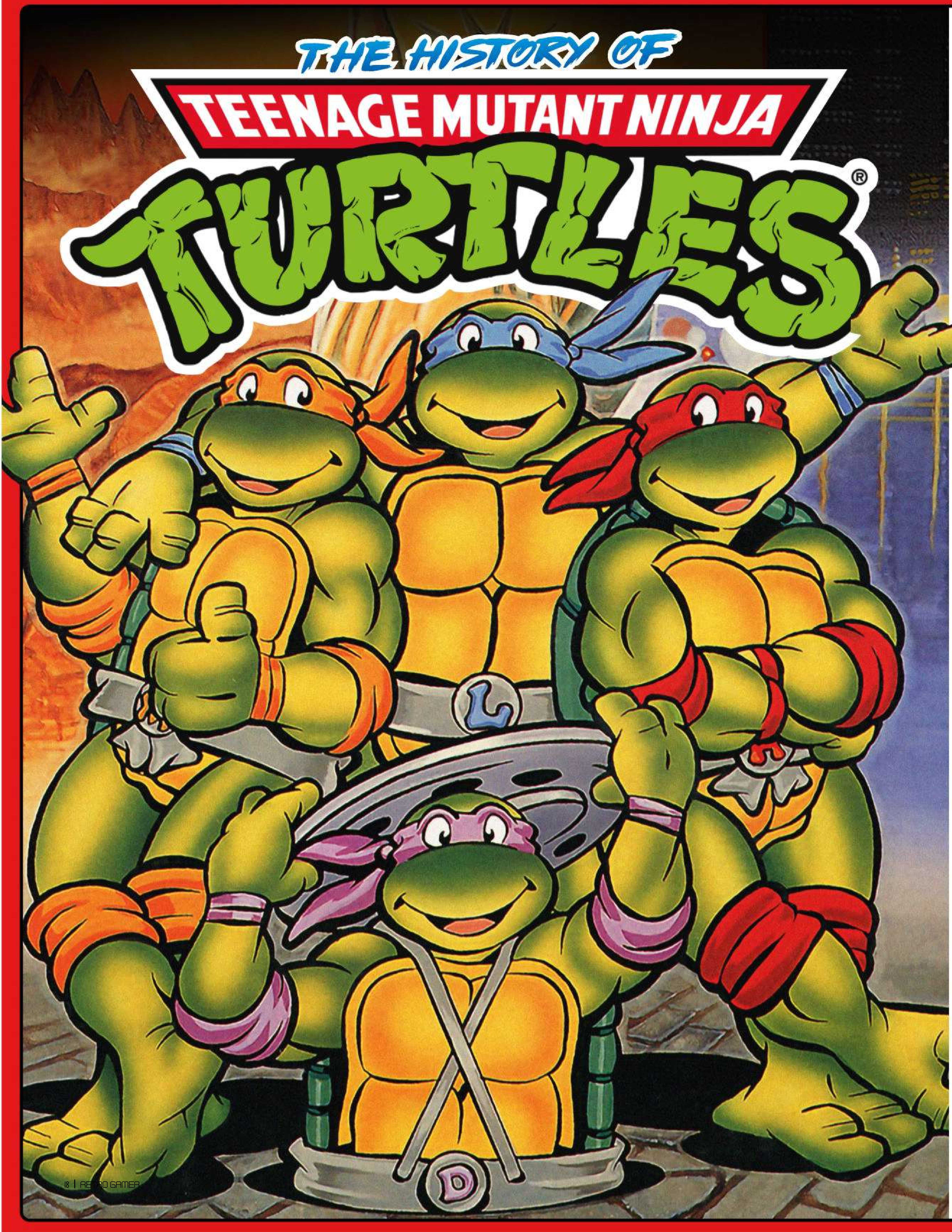
Activision was formed by a group of disgruntled and disillusioned Atari staff, a group of individuals that wanted to prove they were worth far more than Atari was paying them. As a result, Activision had a fire in its belly and that fire certainly lit up the Atari 2600.

I've mentioned the Activision games of Steve Cartwright in the past, classics like *Barnstorming*, *Seaquest* and *Frostbite*, but David Crane's fantastic library of work on the system also needs highlighting. While *Pitfall!* and its sequel will always be the games David is best remembered for, I'd like to make a case for the delightful *Freeway*.

Freeway is essentially a retread of *Frogger*, but the ponds, logs and lily pads have been replaced by a bustling freeway and Konami's iconic frog has been swapped out for a yellow chicken. Navigate ten rows of traffic and you'll earn a precious point, but care needs to be taken as the lanes of vehicles move at different speeds – get hit by a car cruising at low speed and you'll be knocked back a lane or two, a collision with a vehicle travelling at top speed however kills you instantly.

Luckily, time is your only real enemy in *Freeway* and you have just over two minutes to notch up as many points as possible – you can even play against a friend which adds a further level of urgency. While it may look simplistic, the fast and frantic pace of *Freeway* means it's still a laugh to play today. Here's hoping Digital Eclipse gets to tackle an Activision-themed Atari 2600 compilation next.

THE HISTORY OF TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES



SOME LICENSED CHARACTERS MAKE FOR GREAT GAMES, BUT THE RADICAL HALF-SHELLED HEROES HAVE MANAGED TO ACHIEVE GREATNESS REPEATEDLY – THOUGH NOT ALWAYS CONSISTENTLY. WE LOOK BACK AT THREE DECADES OF TURTLES, FROM THE BAD TO THE RAD

WORDS BY NICK THORPE

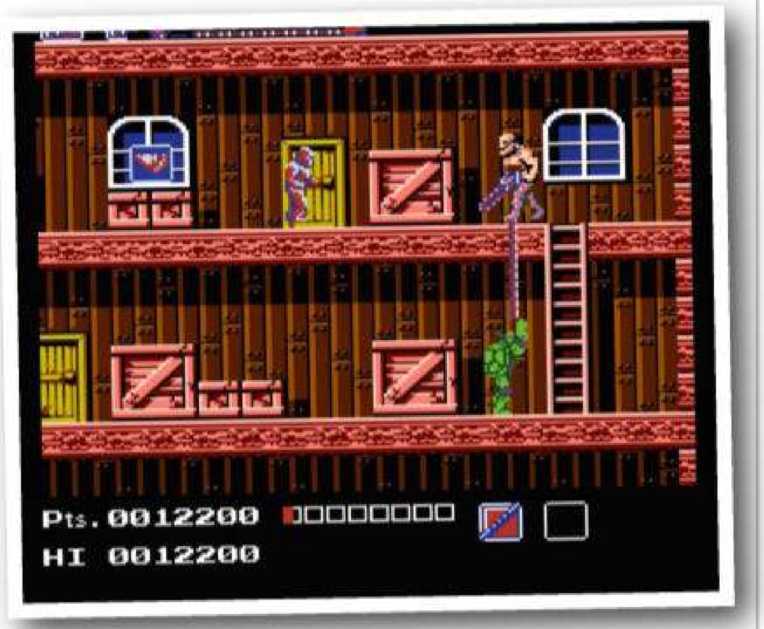
» Chris Kohler, editorial director, Digital Eclipse.

» Thomas Church, designer, Digital Eclipse.

» Stephen Frost, head of production, Digital Eclipse.

For many people the name Leonardo conjures up thoughts of da Vinci, one of history's most brilliant artists, but if you were a child of the Eighties or later it probably brings to mind his namesake – the leader of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Starting off as a cult comic before ballooning into an enormous multimedia franchise, few aspects of youth culture have been able to escape Splinter's pupils, and videogames are no exception. However, the *Turtles* licence is no run-of-the-mill cash grab, as plenty of the games have been very memorable.

If you grew up with a NES in the UK, chances are you got it because it was bundled with the first-ever *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* game – or *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles*, as we called them in our ninja-averse part of the world. Konami's action game saw you primarily working your way through scrolling platform environments and beating up enemies, with the goal of retrieving the Life Transformer Gun from Shredder in order to free Splinter from his rat form and make him human again. Although the game is a solo affair, you play as all of the Turtles. "Obviously when someone thinks of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, they think of the team dynamic between the Turtles themselves," says Thomas Church, designer at Digital Eclipse, the team behind *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Cowabunga Collection*. "*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* for the NES made great use of this aspect by allowing players to dynamically swap between the turtles whenever they'd like and incentivising use of said mechanic by having each turtle retain their own health bars."



» [NES] Donatello usually has the greatest reach of the Turtles, which is handy in situations like this.

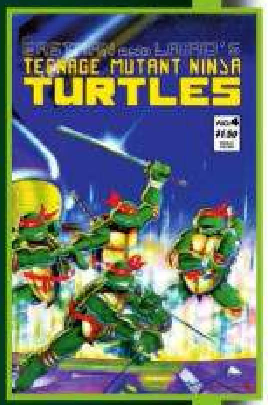
> "OBVIOUSLY WHEN SOMEONE THINKS OF THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES, THEY THINK OF THE TEAM DYNAMIC BETWEEN THE TURTLES THEMSELVES"
>
> **THOMAS CHURCH**

Top-down sections facilitate travel between the platform areas, with the Turtles fending off enemy attacks as they go. "Looking at the design documents in *The Cowabunga Collection*, you can see that Konami's designers wanted to craft something new and unique around the story of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. They were clearly inspired by the idea of travelling underground through the sewers of New York City, and thus came up with the concept of sewers that connect players to different bits of the overworld that are otherwise inaccessible," says Chris Kohler, editorial director at Digital Eclipse. "Rather than just slapping the Turtles into a pre-existing

▶

REPTILE ROOTS

JUST WHERE DO THOSE MAGNIFICENT MUTANTS COME FROM?

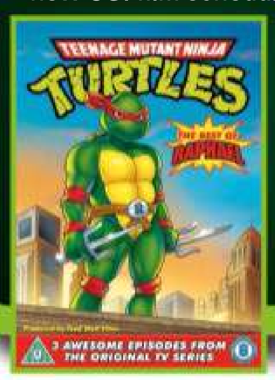


■ When Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman dreamed up *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in the mid-Eighties, enormous global success wasn't part of the design. The concept was full of parodies, with Daredevil being a notable inspiration, and the duo only used the names of Renaissance artists because they couldn't come up with Japanese names that sounded convincing. The independent creators only printed a few thousand copies of their first issue.

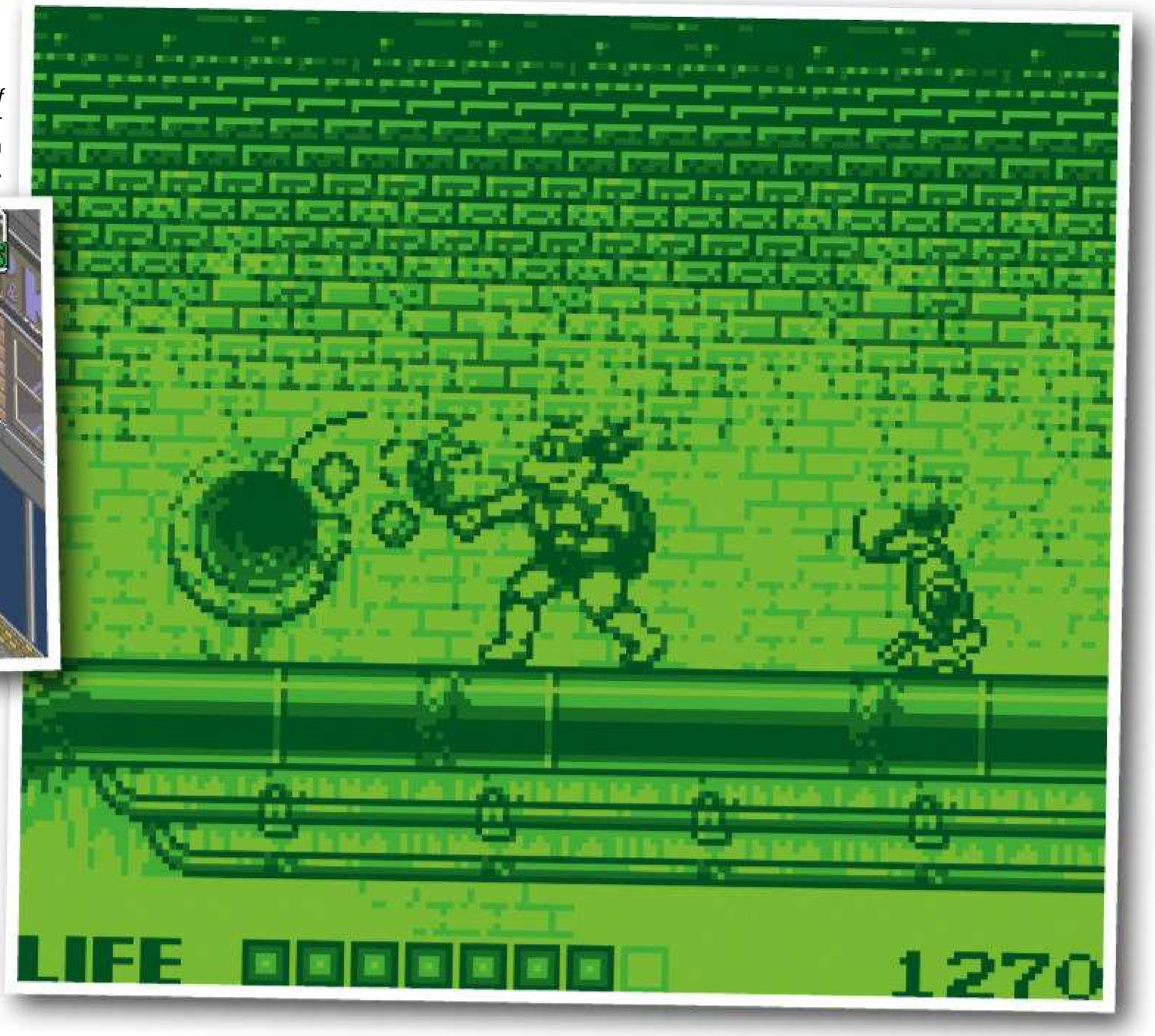
Though the creators of the Turtles didn't have grand ambitions, their first major licensee did. Playmates, a toy company, wanted a TV series on the air to help sell its action figures. That arrived in 1987, and despite having to adopt a lighter tone to appeal to children, it quickly overtook the comics in the public consciousness. Popular villains including Krang, Bebop and Rocksteady were introduced in the show, as were the distinctive coloured headbands that make the heroes more easily identifiable. A live-action film followed in 1990, grossing over $200 million and spawning two sequels, and in 1994 the *New York Times* reported that the franchise had generated over $6 billion in merchandise sales.

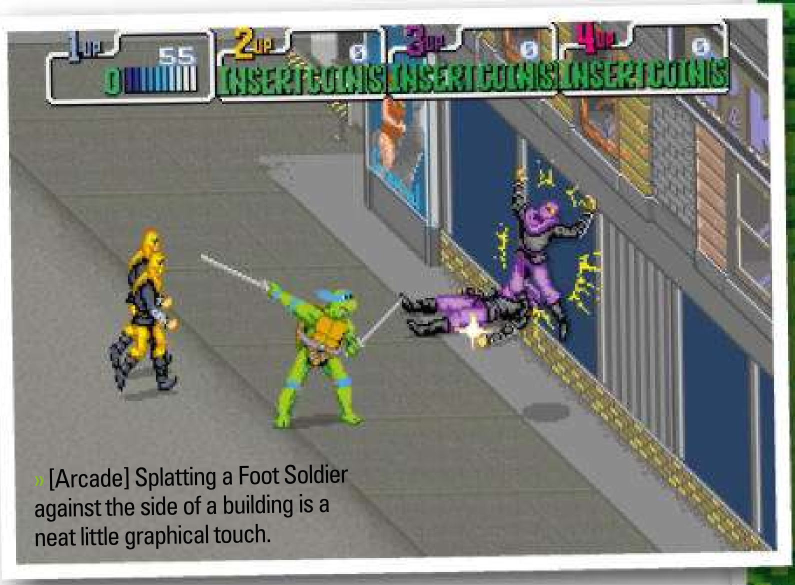
The series hit a rough patch in the late-Nineties, with the end of the animated series in 1996 and the beginning of the infamous live-action series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation*, which introduced the rarely remembered female fighter Venus. Kevin Eastman even sold his share in the property in 2000. But when the Turtles re-emerged from their shells for a second animated series in 2003, it was a success that ran for 155 episodes over six years and paved the way for a CGI film in 2007. In 2009, the series was sold to Nickelodeon.

Since then, two additional animated series have brought the total number of TV episodes to more than 500, and two more live-action films were released in 2014 and 2016, with a new CGI film scheduled for 2023. Meanwhile, IDW Comics has been publishing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics since 2011, with Kevin Eastman returning to write many of the stories for the new series.



» [Game Boy] *Fall Of The Foot Clan* is rather visually detailed for such an early Game Boy game.





» [Arcade] Splatting a Foot Soldier against the side of a building is a neat little graphical touch.

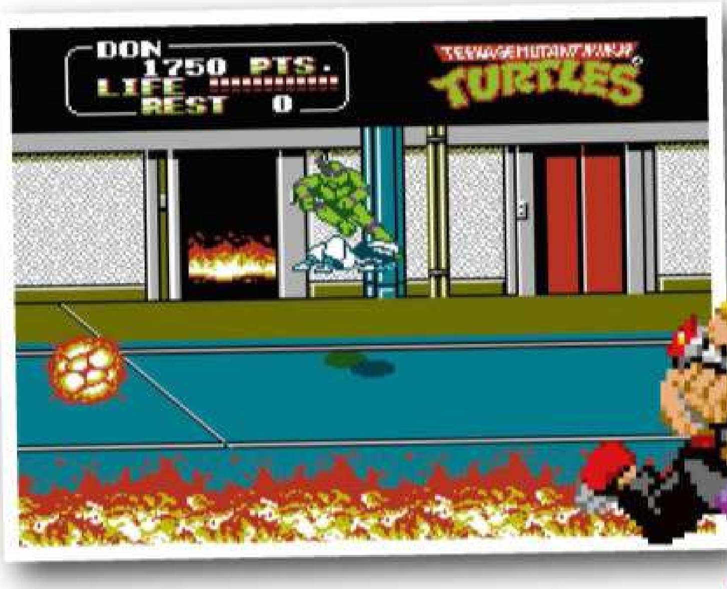
game format, Konami's designers really thought about what suited the backstory and mythology of the Turtles, which is commendable." The NES game was a roaring success, scoring 90% in *Mean Machines* and selling a whopping four-million copies, with conversions later developed for a variety of home-computer formats.

The Turtles made their arcade debut a few months later, and it didn't struggle to gain attention. "If you didn't know there was a *TMNT* game, you would know it as soon as you walked into the local arcade or bowling alley, heard the unmistakable sound of the *TMNT* theme song blaring at top volume throughout the place, and cranked your head around to see this full-screen, colourful animation playing in this behemoth four-player cabinet," says Chris. The scrolling beat-'em-up tasked the Turtles with rescuing April O'Neil and Splinter, en route to a climactic showdown with Krang and Shredder at the Technodrome.

The arcade beat-'em-up scene was very competitive in 1989 thanks to the arrival of games like *Golden Axe* and *Final Fight*, but *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* gained a unique advantage from its source material. "While multiplayer beat-'em-up games were hardly a rarity back then, *TMNT* was one of the first games to really start pushing the number of players who could all play together," says Thomas. "When I think back to playing *TMNT* in the arcades, I immediately think of the vibrant colours used for each Turtle and how all my friends would each be drawn to their own uniquely coloured turtle. Even family members who weren't familiar with the franchise could still say stuff like, 'Oh, I like this Turtle wearing purple!'"

IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A TMNT GAME, YOU WOULD KNOW IT AS SOON AS YOU WALKED INTO THE LOCAL ARCADE OR BOWLING ALLEY

CHRIS KOHLER



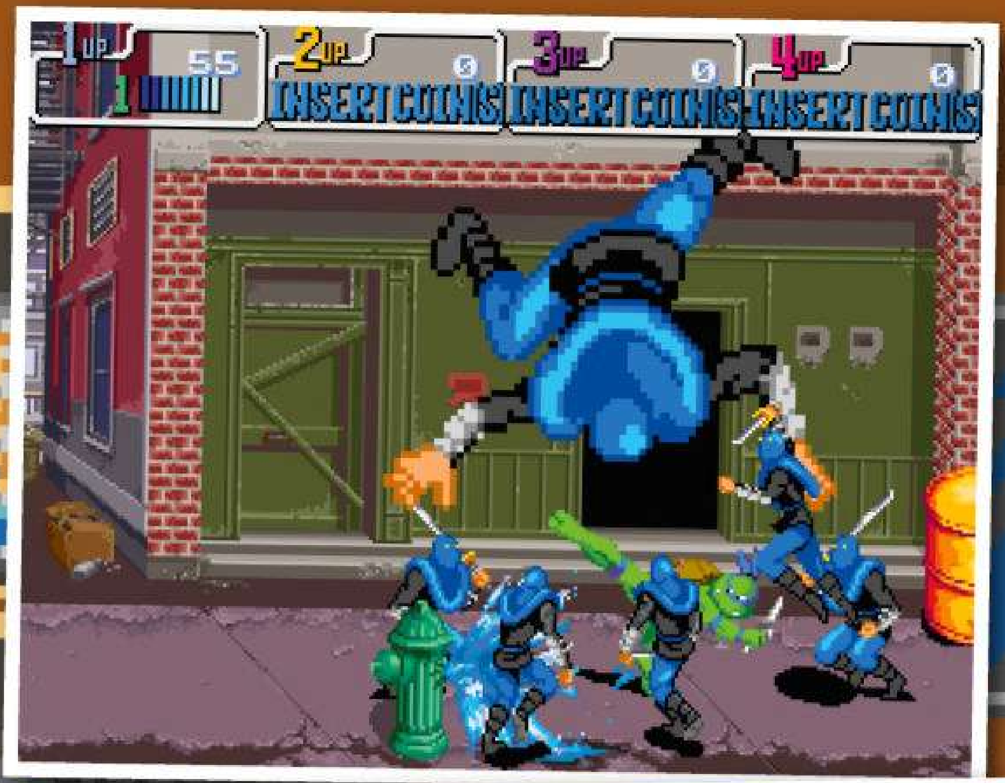
» [NES] The dramatic fire in April O'Neil's apartment building is a nod to events in the comics and film.

***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* earned the award for the Most Played Dedicated Videogame in America at the AMOA Awards in October 1990, and the game was very successful internationally too.** A NES conversion arrived just in time for Christmas that year and although it only offered two-player action, Konami changed and extended the experience to make it worth playing in its own right. The voucher for a free personal pan pizza at Pizza Hut certainly didn't hurt, either. Probe also handled conversions to popular home-computer formats in Europe, with the 8-bit versions being generally better regarded than the 16-bit ones.

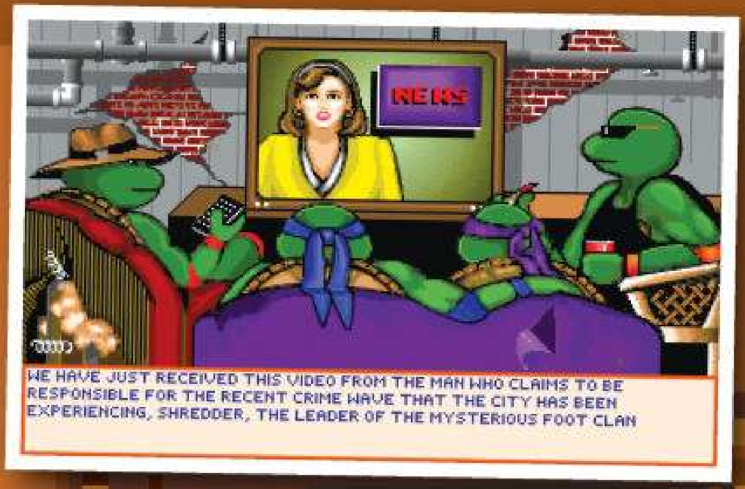
PC owners got an exclusive adventure in 1991, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Manhattan Missions*. The game retells the origin story of the Turtles and it's clear that the comic is more of an inspiration for the tone of the game than the cartoon, but it incorporates enough elements from that and the film to make for a strange mishmash of ideas. The player takes on missions in a non-linear fashion, with gameplay that the developer Distinctive Software clearly liked in *Prince Of Persia*, right down to the time limit on finding Shredder. It's certainly an interesting game, despite being one of the more forgotten entries in the series.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall Of The Foot Clan brought the series to the Game Boy in 1990. Although the game has a similar plot to the NES version, the action is more like that of *Kung-Fu Master*, with some light platforming elements sprinkled in. "I can only speculate here, but I think the design is based on the idea that players would be approaching this game during a few minutes of downtime here and there," says Chris. "Rather than a complicated design like we saw in the original NES version, it's really just about moving forward and taking each enemy as they come, with nice big sprites that can be clearly seen on the Game Boy's low-resolution, non-backlit screen." *Mean Machines* felt that "even the most seasoned of beat-'em-up fans will find the going tough" and awarded it 88%. A sequel titled *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Back From The Sewers* arrived on the Game Boy in 1991. The graphics and sound are a major step up from *Fall Of The Foot Clan*, and gameplay switches between the original gameplay style and arcade-style sections with lateral movement. *ACE* gave it 785/1,000, complaining that "basically it's just the first *Turtles* game with bigger graphics".

The Turtles returned to the arcade in 1991 with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles In Time*, which saw Krang stealing the Statue Of Liberty before Shredder sends the brothers through a time warp. Konami stuck with the winning formula of the previous game, tinkering with new moves such as a side-to-side slam attack. "Not only did it have all the aspects that made the first game so popular, but it came about in a time when technology was really

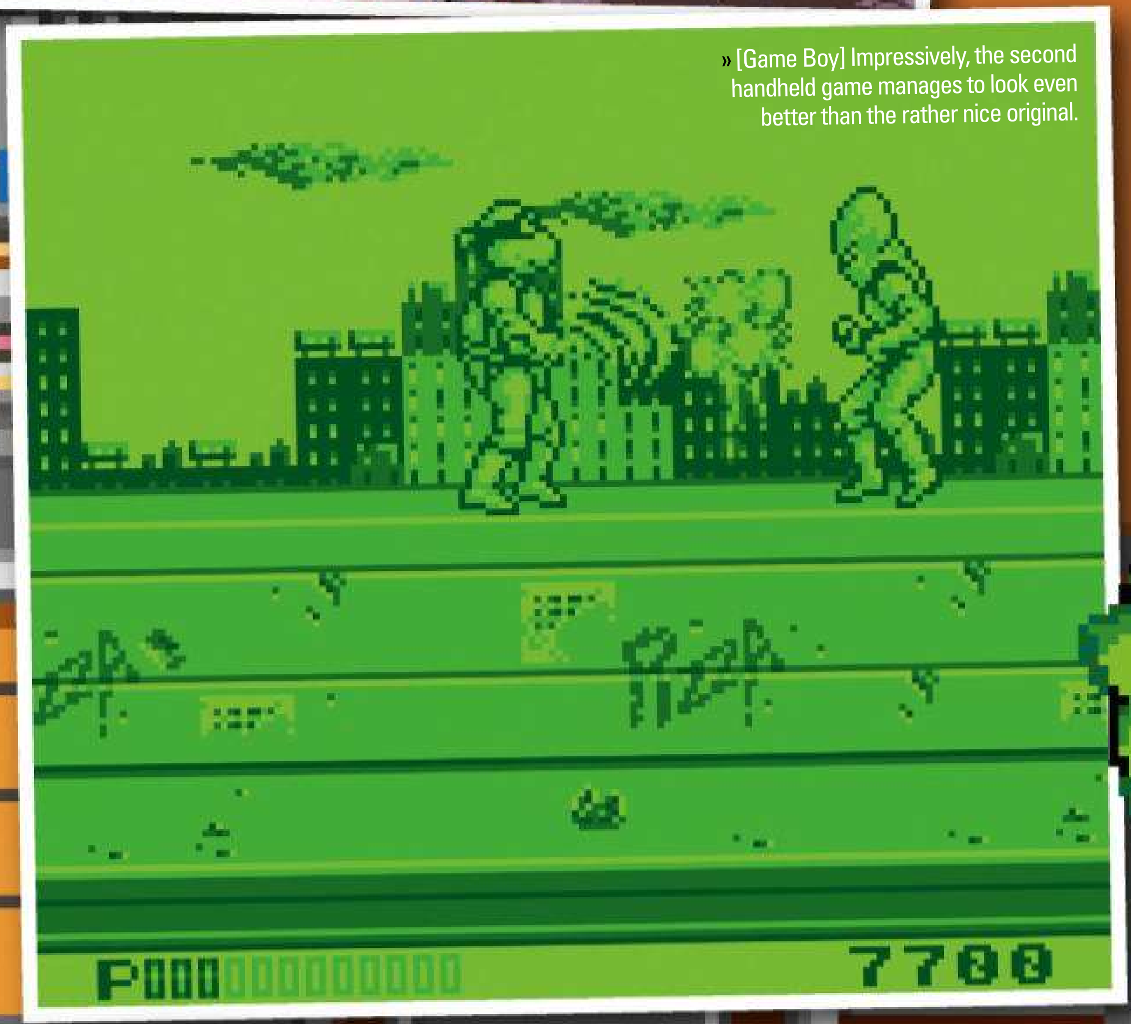


» [Arcade] Throwing the enemy into the screen via the magic of sprite scaling still feels very cool.



WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED THIS VIDEO FROM THE MAN WHO CLAIMS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RECENT CRIME WAVE THAT THE CITY HAS BEEN EXPERIENCING, SHREDDER, THE LEADER OF THE MYSTERIOUS FOOT CLAN

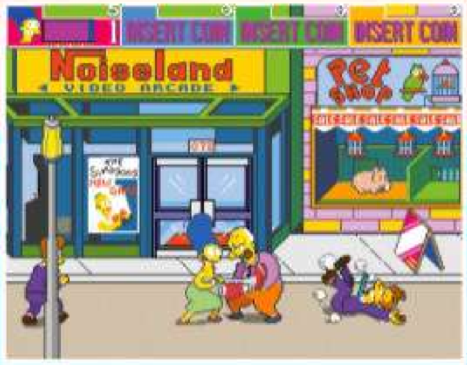
» [PC] One thing *Manhattan Missions* has going for it is some really lovely art.



» [Game Boy] Impressively, the second handheld game manages to look even better than the rather nice original.

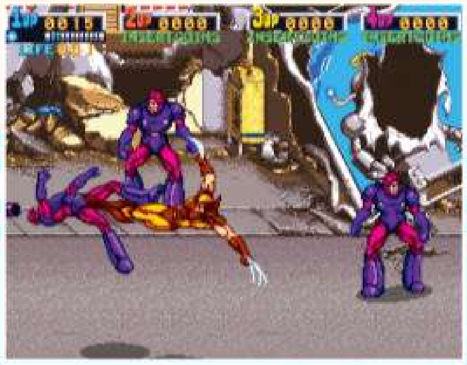
LICENSED LEGACY

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE TURTLES, KONAMI WENT BIG ON BEAT-'EM-UP TIE-INS



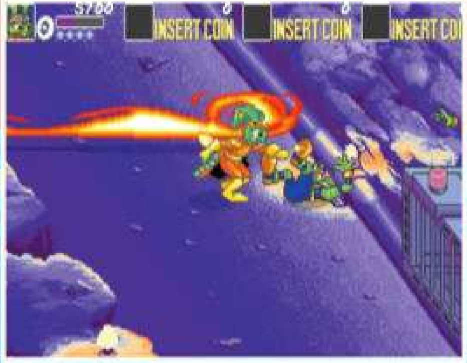
THE SIMPSONS

Like the Turtles' arcade debut, the first game starring Springfield's most famous family is a popular four-player beat-'em-up. That's no coincidence, as Chris Kohler points out, "In the credits for *The Simpsons*, there's a special thanks to 'Team GX963' – that's the part number for the *TMNT* arcade circuit board."



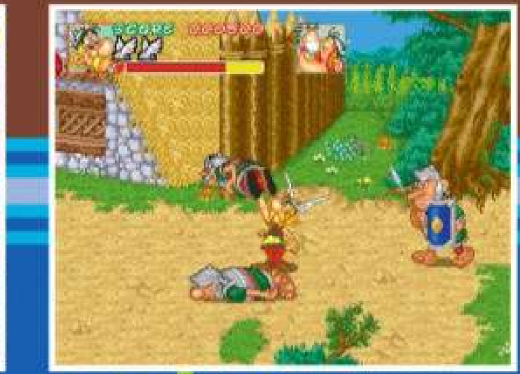
X-MEN

How do you top a four-player game? Easy – add a couple more control panels to the cabinet so six people can control Marvel's mutants. The graphical staff of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* arcade game moved on to work on this, with their efforts showcased via a spectacular dual-monitor display.



BUCKY O'HARE

Just like the *Turtles* game that inspired it, *The Simpsons* was a big success, so a number of the same staff returned to create this cartoon tie-in. Once again, the four-player treatment was key to the success of the game, which arcade operators ranked highly in *RePlay* magazine's earnings poll.



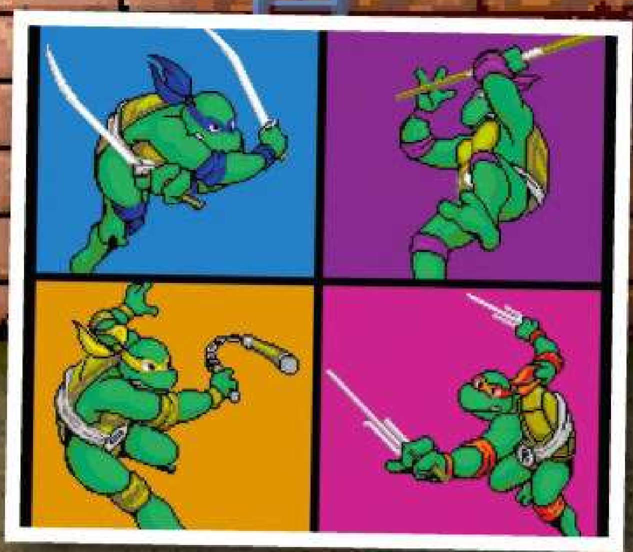
ASTÉRIX

This adaptation of the popular French comic series was unusual in that it didn't have the four-player action of its contemporaries. A number of its staff – particularly those working with sound and music – did work on *Turtles* games before and after *Astérix*, including the prolific composer Michiru Yamane.

MUST-HAVE MUTATIONS

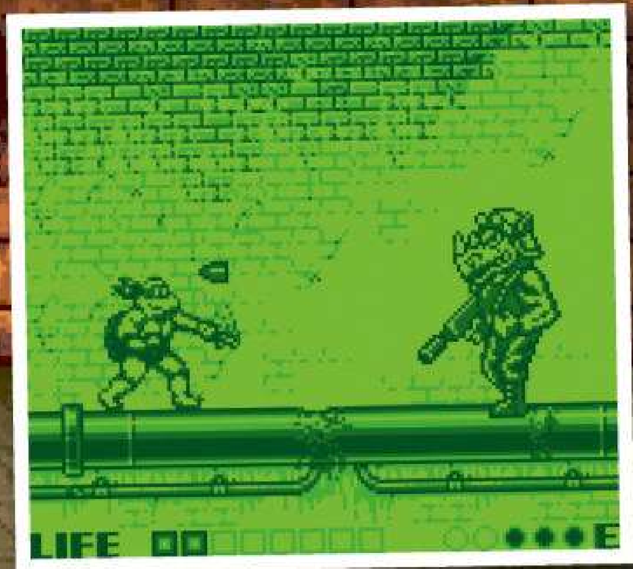
VIVID VISUALS

Whether it's with pixel art or cel-shaded 3D models, capturing the distinctive looks of the comics and cartoons helps to lend the games an air of authenticity.



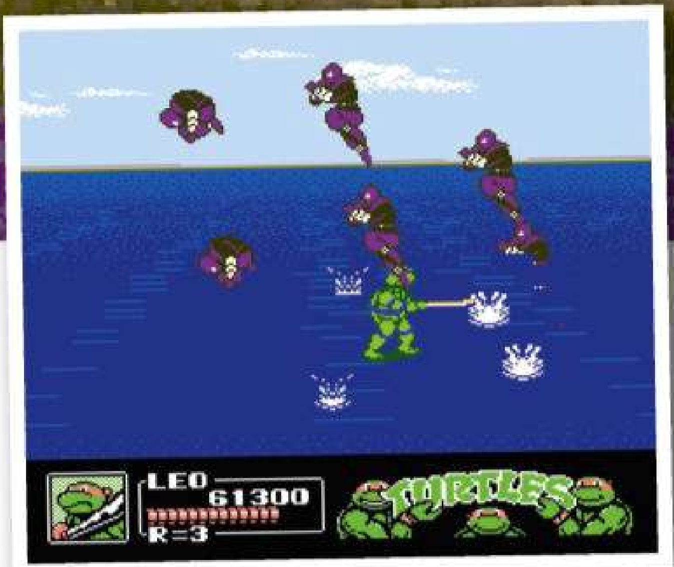
TEAM TIME

The fact that the Turtles are a closely bonded quartet should be factored into gameplay, even when you're playing solo as in the original NES game.



SMOOTH SKILLS

When you're deflecting enemy bullets with your weapons, chucking enemies at the screen and racking up crazy combos, you feel like a real ninja.



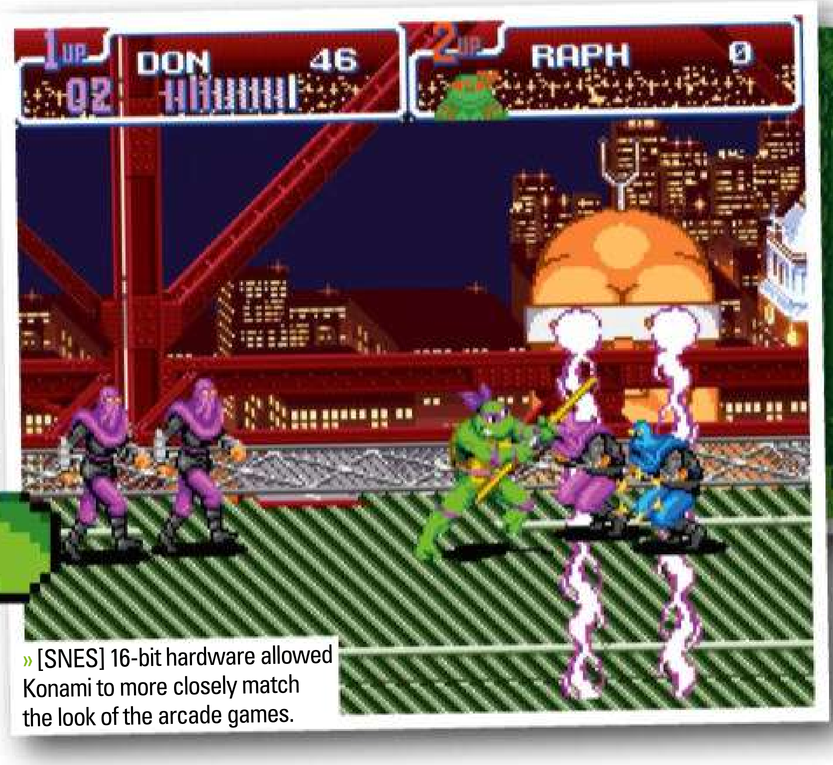
» [NES] *The Manhattan Project* features an impressive amount of action on-screen, considering the platform.

hitting its stride in bringing out the best in beat-'em-up games," says Thomas. "Both sound and graphic quality felt like a noticeable step up, even if this was simply how they were implemented in-game and not necessarily because of a change in hardware." That was evident with presentational flourishes such as defeated Foot Soldiers flying towards the screen and enormous moving enemies.

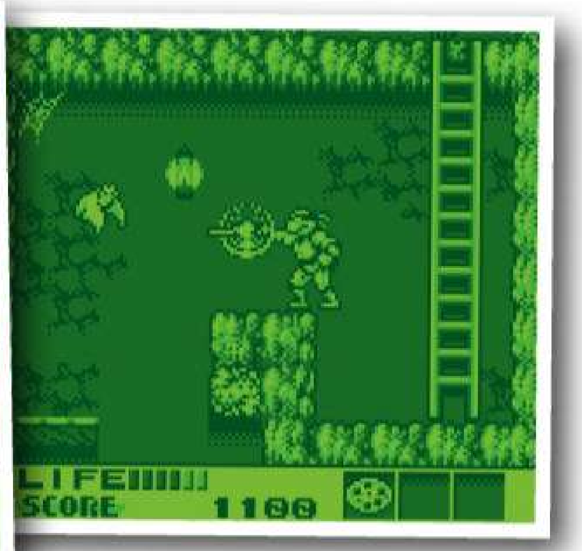
Once again, arcade success led to a home conversion, this time for the SNES. "When Konami brought *Turtles In Time* from the arcade to the SNES, they knew they had to lose the four-player mode, but they wanted to improve it in every other way, by adding more features, more bosses, more levels, and by improving the feel of the combat as well," Chris explains. "What came out of those efforts was, in some fans' view, the ultimate expression of the *Turtles* beat-'em-up." The subject of which version is better is a matter of debate, as Digital Eclipse's head of production Stephen Frost acknowledges. "From a personal perspective, I think – especially for a single-player experience – that the SNES version definitely has more to offer, overall. However, there is also something compelling and magical about having four players come together to play the arcade version."

NES owners didn't get a conversion of *Turtles In Time*, but they did get a bespoke beat-'em-up in the form of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III: The Manhattan Project*. Being a fairly late NES release, and one which didn't see a European release, *The Manhattan Project* doesn't always get its due. "*TMNT III: The Manhattan Project* is, in my view, an absolute 8-bit masterpiece – beginning with the framework that they'd laid down to get a version of the arcade game playing on the NES, they now had the ability to do something entirely new that played to the strengths of the NES versus trying to replicate something from more powerful hardware," says Chris. "*Manhattan Project* is just stuffed to the gills – more levels, more characters, more moves, more animation. It was more complex than the arcade games could have been – this would have been too many levels, too many options for an arcade game that was designed to churn

> "MANHATTAN PROJECT IS, IN MY VIEW, AN ABSOLUTE 8-BIT MASTERPIECE – BEGINNING WITH THE FRAMEWORK THAT THEY'D LAID DOWN TO GET A VERSION OF THE ARCADE GAME PLAYING ON THE NES"
>
> **CHRIS KOHLER**

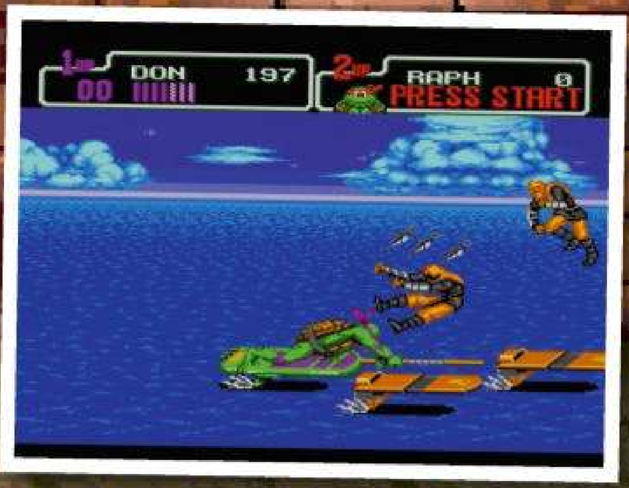


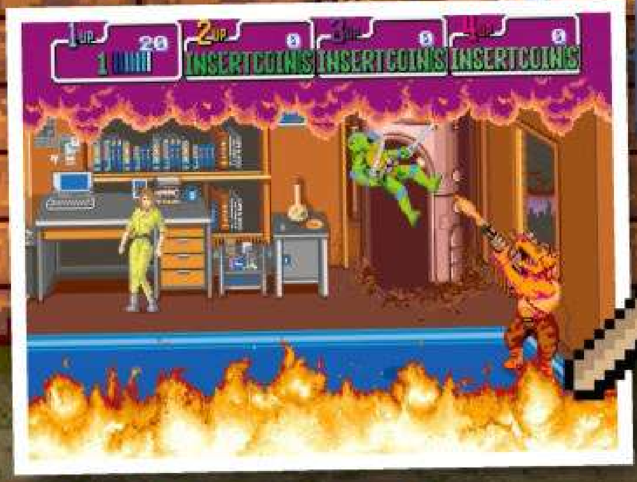
» [SNES] 16-bit hardware allowed Konami to more closely match the look of the arcade games.



» [Game Boy] Very few Metroidvanias had been attempted on Game Boy prior to *Radical Rescue*.

WHAT MAKES UP THE DNA OF THE GREATEST TURTLES GAMES?



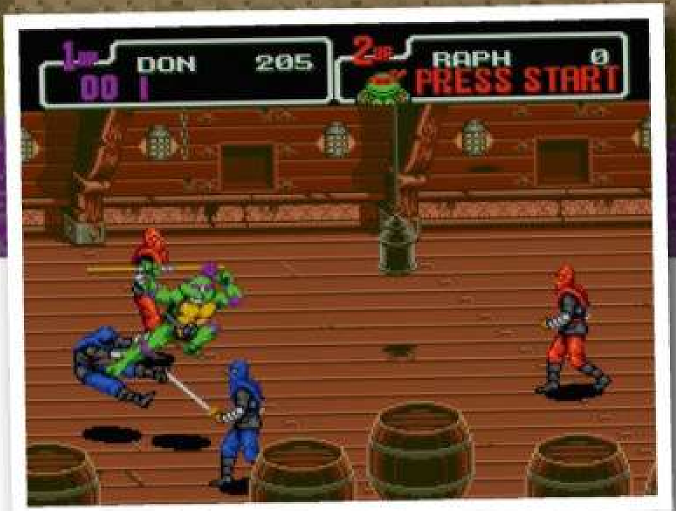


RADICAL RIDES

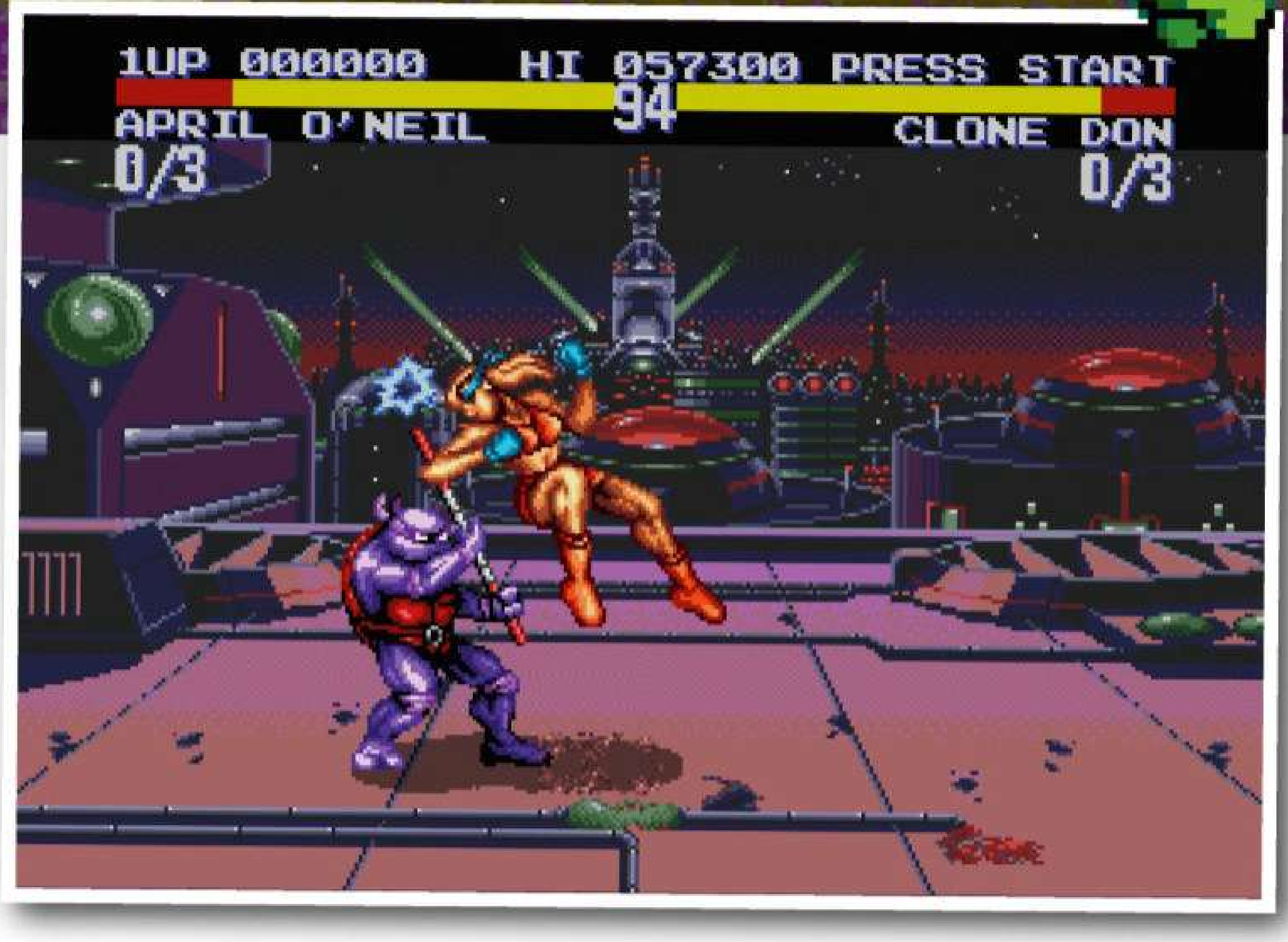
■ Vehicular sections have provided plenty of great moments in *Turtles* games, from jet-powered surfboards to rides on the back of Casey Jones' motorbike.

BURLY BOSSES

■ Whether you're battling Bebop and Rocksteady, Baxter Stockman or Shredder himself, defeating a fearsome foe just makes you feel all the more heroic.



» [Mega Drive] *The Hyperstone Heist* is good fun, but has become a rather expensive game in its original form.



» [Mega Drive] If you're going to fight a clone of your friend anywhere, it may as well be space.

through players (and their tokens) efficiently. But as a home-only game, it was perfect."

The success of Sega's Mega Drive had become impossible to ignore by 1992, with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Hyperstone Heist* being one of Konami's first releases for the console. Rather than directly adapting *Turtles In Time*, this beat-'em-up takes elements from both arcade games. "It was not common in Japan at that time to see multi-platform releases. If you look at Konami's Genesis game line-up, you might see games in the same franchises as what appeared on the SNES, but the games themselves were usually different, usually by different teams," notes Chris, explaining the unusual approach. "Look at the fact that they did three totally different *Castlevania* games for the SNES, Genesis and PC Engine, for example. I think there was more of a sense that they had to provide original, unique content for each platform." *Mega* gave it 80%, calling it "more fun than *Streets Of Rage 2*" but also saying that it "doesn't quite have the variety of clever moves or quite as much challenge".

You'd be forgiven for thinking that *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III: Radical Rescue* takes after its Game Boy predecessors, given the name, but the 1993 release actually goes in a radically different direction despite being developed by the same core staff. Starting as Michelangelo, you must rescue the other Turtles as well as Splinter and April O'Neil, not only because it's the right thing to do but also because you need their abilities to progress through the Metroidvania-style platform adventure. *CVG* gave it 90%, feeling that it has "good music for a change" and "could soon be in the top five handheld games of all time".

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Tournament Fighters was Konami's last big push with the series in the Nineties. Unusually, three different games were produced under the same name, all three being one-on-one fighting games with different character rosters, settings and plots. SNES and Mega Drive versions were released in 1993, with the former generally being considered better. "When you look at the design documents (hundreds and hundreds of pages of which are in *The Cowabunga Collection*!), you can tell there was a massive effort put forth here to craft something worthy of the *TMNT* franchise and something that would be Konami's ▶

DELIVERY? NO, COLLECTION

HOW KONAMI'S CLASSICS HAVE RETURNED VIA THE COWABUNGA COLLECTION

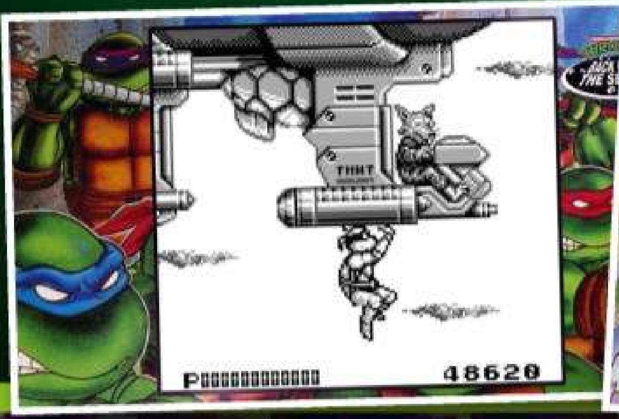
Shredder's Revenge wasn't the only reason that 2022 was a great year for fans of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* games, as Konami released *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Cowabunga Collection*. Developed by Digital Eclipse, this compilation is available on all modern platforms and comprises 13 console and arcade games from 1989-1994, including arcade, NES, SNES, Game Boy and Mega Drive games.

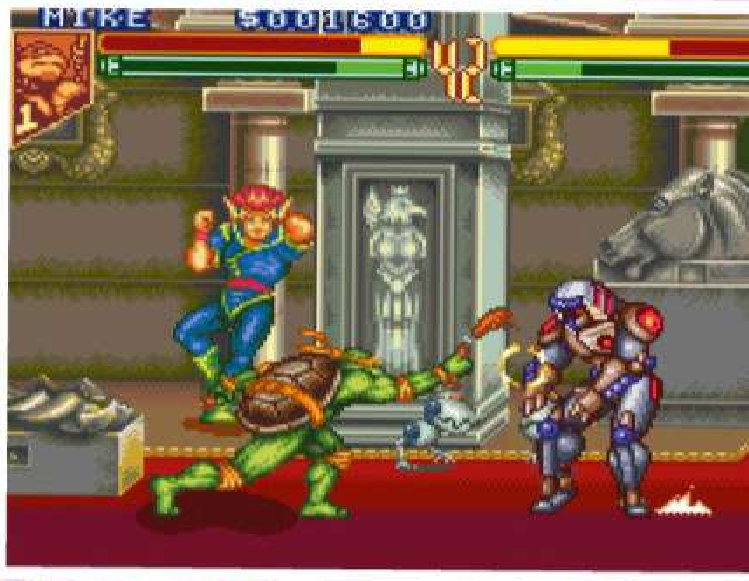
"When Konami began releasing its earlier collections, there was a pretty strong fan outcry for a *Turtles* compilation," says Chris Kohler. "The original *TMNT* on NES was the biggest-selling third-party game for the platform worldwide, with over four-million units sold, so that's not too surprising!" Charles Murakami, senior producer at Konami, also saw this fan response and took the opportunity. "I pitched a collection with 13 of Konami's classic *TMNT* games along with comic and cartoon pieces to make a full *TMNT* celebration! The Konami US office was enthused with the plan and the rest of Konami were convinced this was the most exciting way to go," he explains. "I've also been a fan of Digital Eclipse's other collections and was eager to see if they were interested. Seeing their excitement to work on a *TMNT* collection let me know that they're the right group to work on this project."

Digital Eclipse is known for going above and beyond on its retro-gaming collections, and this one is no different. "We're very privileged to get to work with Rich Whitehouse, who was the ROM engineer on this project and was able to reverse-engineer the games and figure out how to enable things like playable bosses as well as surface other buried features that for whatever reason didn't make it into the original games," says Chris. Other options, depending on the game, include regional variations, sprite flicker removal and even online play.

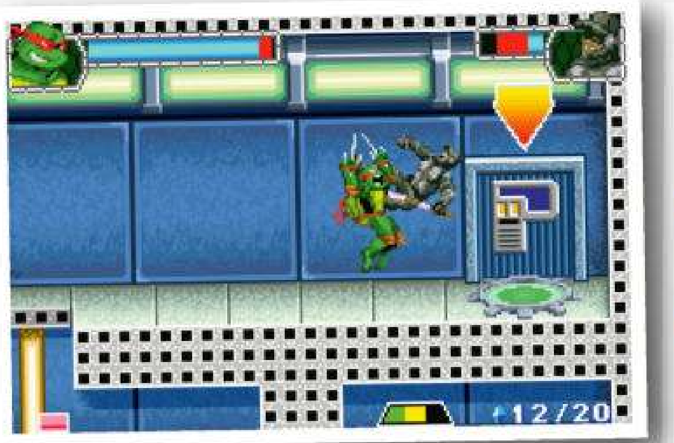
To create the Turtles' Lair museum section, Chris spent a full week researching at The Strong to grab press materials and style guides, as well as tracking down complete copies of every game in the collection. "Konami went through their massive archive in Japan and found nearly 2,000 pages of design documents and art, which we scanned, organised, translated/captioned, and included in the Turtles' Lair," he explains. "They weren't sure what was left since it had been over 30 years since anyone had pulled these files," adds Charles. "They did a fantastic job hunting so many pieces! I was overjoyed that we could show these awesome docs to our fans for the first time."

"I'm really proud of the overall scope and level of quality in *The Cowabunga Collection*. We spent a lot of time on everything from the presentation to the content found in Turtles' Lair in order to provide an experience that would excite both long-time fans of *TMNT*, as well as the casual audience," says Stephen Frost, who is particularly proud of the interactive strategy guides. "There was a time where we didn't think we were going to be able to include them since they required a lot of work across all the disciplines and our final deadline was fast approaching. However, everyone felt they were important and wanted them, so we got them in. It seemed that extra work paid off, too, as the guides are generally one of the main things that fans bring up and talk about."

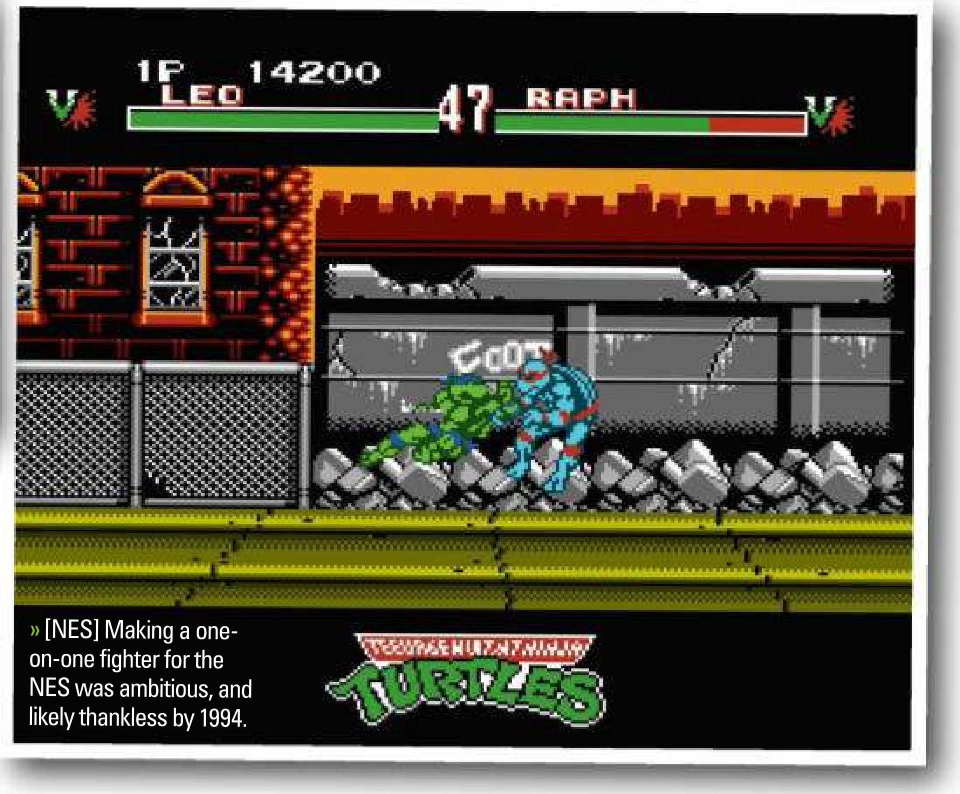




» [SNES] It feels like Nintendo fans got the best end of the stick with *Tournament Fighters*.



» [Game Boy Advance] There's some good fun to be had with Konami's GBA games, with *Battle Nexus* being the best.



» [NES] Making a one-on-one fighter for the NES was ambitious, and likely thankless by 1994.

biggest in-house competitor to *Street Fighter II*. So much effort was lavished on the animations, the move sets and the ambience," says Chris. The NES version, Konami's final game for the platform in North America and Europe, arrived in 1994 and was a particularly ambitious project. These games ended up as a last hurrah for the initial range of *Turtles* games, as they skipped the PlayStation, Saturn and N64.

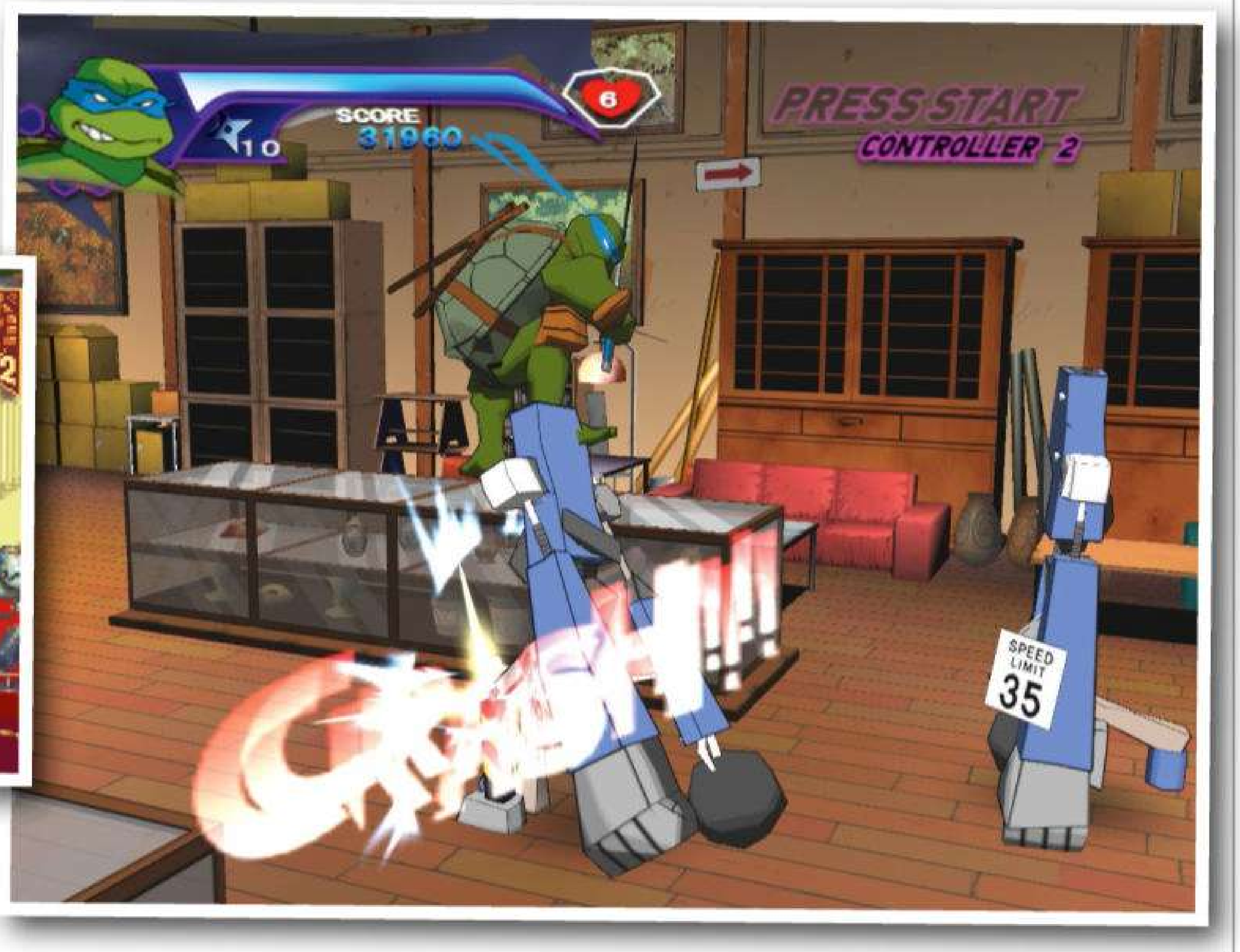
When the Turtles returned to TV screens with a new cartoon in 2003, Konami was ready with a brand-new beat-'em-up simply titled *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, for the PS2, GameCube, Xbox and PC. Just as in the new TV series, the four heroes come into conflict with mutated sewer-dwelling humans, and the story is told using clips from the show – in fact, it even includes newly animated sequences for the new plot points. Stunning cel-shaded 3D graphics perfectly captured the look of the cartoon, but the gameplay lacked the variety and four-player action of past instalments. Reviewing the Xbox version, *games™* felt that it "doesn't do anything particularly innovative, though it's perfectly playable and looks great", giving it a 5/10 score.

Two sequels followed in 2004 and 2005, adapting further seasons of the show. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: Battle Nexus* allows for four players but bizarrely forces them to share a life bar, and *Cube*'s 4.4/10 review suggests that an additional emphasis on platforming "kills the enjoyment off". *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare* scaled back the platforming and gave players their own life bars and new team-up moves, as well as a shop system allowing the purchase of more moves. This improved the game slightly but even a budget price point couldn't save the game from a 3/10 review in *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, which described it as "another sub-standard beat-'em-up that won't test your brain".

A series of decent handheld games ran parallel to the 3D adventures and bore the same names, with the emphasis shifting from combat to platforming as the series went on. *Battle Nexus* on the GBA is the best of the bunch, with *Mutant Nightmare* for the DS suffering from the addition of pointless touchscreen bits. Konami also experimented with arena combat in the style of *Power Stone* in the 2005 multi-platform game *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Melee*. GameSpot felt it to be "slapdash and barren", complaining of poor character balancing, repetitive action and cramped arenas, awarding it a final score of just 4.3/10. After many years with Konami, the time seemed right for another company to try its luck with the reptilian heroes.

That company was Ubisoft. 2007 saw the arrival of *TMNT*, a CGI movie in which the Turtles drift apart, before having to reunite to fend off the threat of ancient, immortal warlords, and its multiformat movie tie-in put a new emphasis on the agility of the Turtles with a much more prominent platforming element. In many ways, it felt like a kid-friendly version of the company's *Prince Of Persia* games, with the main flaws being that it was rather short and easy. Critics had different opinions on how big of a problem this was, but GameSpy rated it 3.5/5, saying that, "If you judge *TMNT* on its own merits as a platform-hopper with a dash of semi-imaginative combat thrown in, then it's a fine game." A bespoke 2D scrolling beat-'em-up was created specifically for the Game Boy Advance, taking after Konami's 2D games with the addition of shopping between stages and a broader set of moves, which could be strung together in satisfying fashion for big combos. IGN's review scored the game 8.5/10 and reflected the overall mood around the game well, calling it "one of the best brawling games I've played in years" despite disappointment over the lack of multiplayer. Unfortunately, it was largely overlooked as many players had already moved on from the platform.

Ubisoft launched a few games for the 25th anniversary of the franchise in 2009. For Xbox 360 and PS3 owners, it looked to the past and came up with *Turtles In Time Re-Shelled*, a downloadable remake of Konami's arcade game. The game didn't fare too well with critics, due to its short length and the inability for additional players to join the action mid-game. It also released *Teenage Mutant Ninja*



» [PC] What you can't see is that this game runs at a smooth 60 frames per second. It looks great.

CROSSOVER CAPERS

SOME OF THE PARTIES THE FEARSOME FOURSOME HAVE BEEN INVITED TO CRASH

SMITE

This free-to-play MOBA pits various deities and their minions against each other in a battle for supremacy. The Turtles arrived as part of a battle pass in 2020, with the characters acting as skins for Osiris, Loki, Mercury and Sun Wukong.

INJUSTICE 2

This DC Comics crossover fighter is the perfect environment for the darker incarnations of the Turtles, akin to what you'd see in the comics rather than the cartoons. All four characters were released as a single DLC pack in 2018.

NICKELODEON KART RACERS

Imagine *Mario Kart*, but with the Turtles racing against the cast of *Hey Arnold*, *Rugrats* and *Spongebob Squarepants*. They also show up in two sequels, which significantly expand the roster while inexplicably failing to include characters from *Kenan & Kel*.

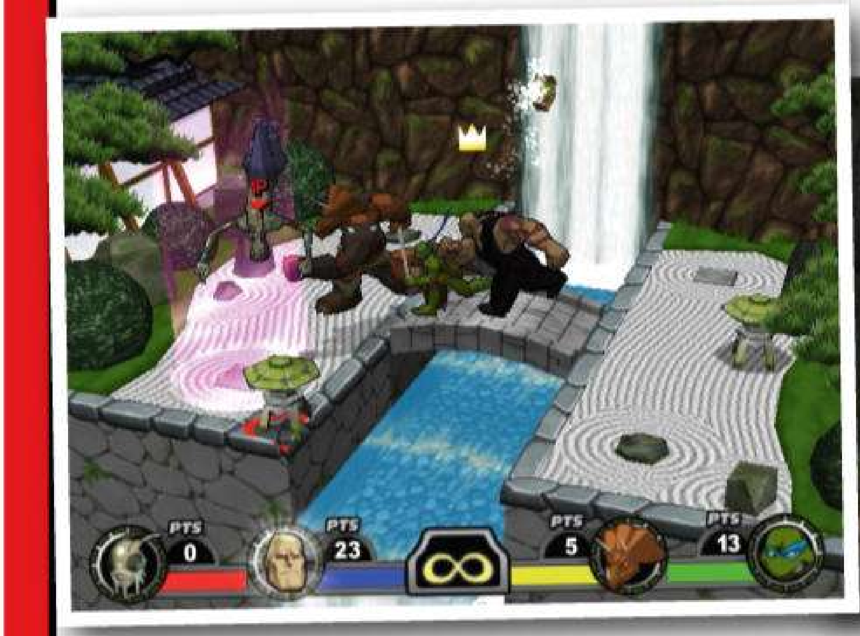
Turtles: Arcade Attack for the DS, a truly unfortunate beat-'em-up which was derided by the press for being simple, repetitive and easy.

The best of the trio was *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up*. The title of the game provides a clue as to its nature, as *Super Smash Bros Brawl* co-developer Game Arts was enlisted to create a *Turtles*-themed clone of the popular party fighter. In a 6/10 review, *games™* stated that it "lacks that sense of celebration that permeated *Brawl*", complaining that relatively few of the interesting characters and locations were utilised, and judged the use of a traditional life bar to be a mistake. Other reviews scored it a little higher, but the overall impression was that it was a decent effort that would struggle to avoid being overshadowed by its inspiration on the Wii. A PS2 version was released in North America, which lacked four of the Wii game's characters – Fugitoid and three of Ubisoft's Rabbids mascots.

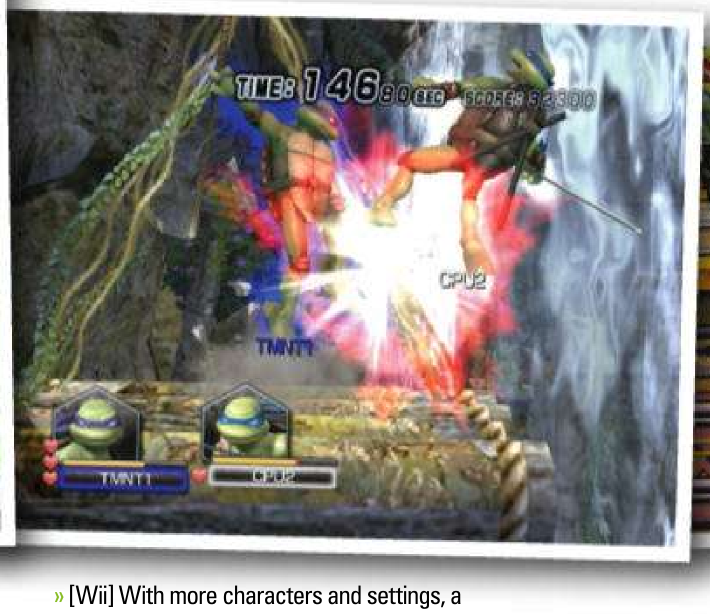
Activision would be the next to take up the half-shelled heroes, and its era got off to a truly disastrous start with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows*, a budget-priced downloadable game for Xbox 360 and PC released in 2013. *Xbox: The Official Magazine* condemned the hack-and-slash adventure for its low framerate, poor camera, "mindless" platforming and "braindead" combat, awarding the game 2/10. The PS3 release in 2014 made some technical improvements, but not enough to improve the general perception of the game.

Somehow the developer Magic Pockets managed to limbo under that low bar with *Nickelodeon Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, based on the computer-animated TV series from 2012. *X-One* magazine blasted the beat-'em-up, saying that it was "bereft of any worthwhile gameplay or narrative" and awarding the Xbox 360 version a measly score of 2/10. The Wii and 3DS versions didn't fare much better, and the PS3 and Wii U versions never saw the light of day.

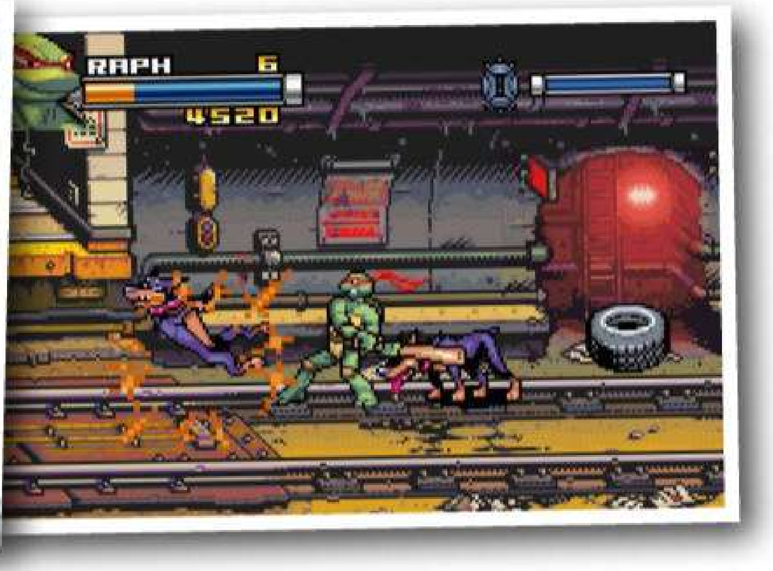
Activision turned to well-known studios for its next games, but the improvements were more modest than expected. WayForward Technologies took on *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Danger Of The Ooze* for Xbox 360, PS3 and 3DS in 2014, delivering a Metroidvania that IGN described as having "little actual life and soul to it" in a 5/10 review. *Bayonetta* developer Platinum Games was behind *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutants In Manhattan*, released for Xbox 360, Xbox One, PS3, PS4 and PC in 2016. Activision had previously worked with the Japanese team on *The Legend Of Korra* and *Transformers: Devastation*, and you'd expect it to be the ideal match for this kind of project, but with just seven months between *Transformers* and *Turtles*, the team had clearly been stretched too thin. *PlayStation Official Magazine*'s 5/10 review sums up the mood nicely, stating that, "Almost every idea included here is a strong one – yet they've all been executed terribly."



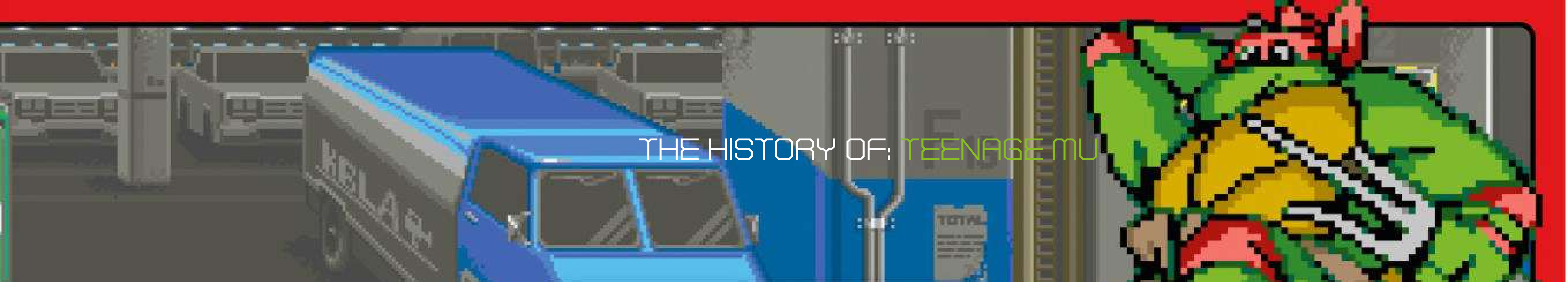
» [PS2] *Mutant Melee* offered a promising concept that we'd like to see tried again one day.

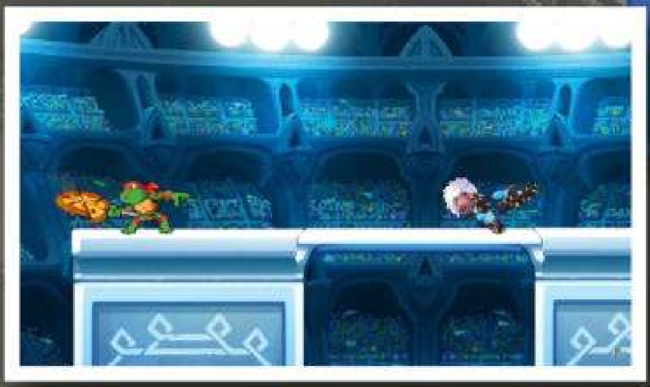


» [Wii] With more characters and settings, a *Turtles Smash* clone could have been a winner.



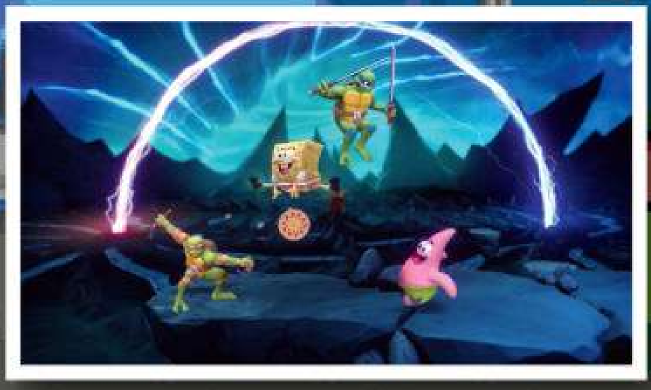
» [Game Boy Advance] *TMNT* looks totally gorgeous on the GBA, but went under-appreciated in its time.





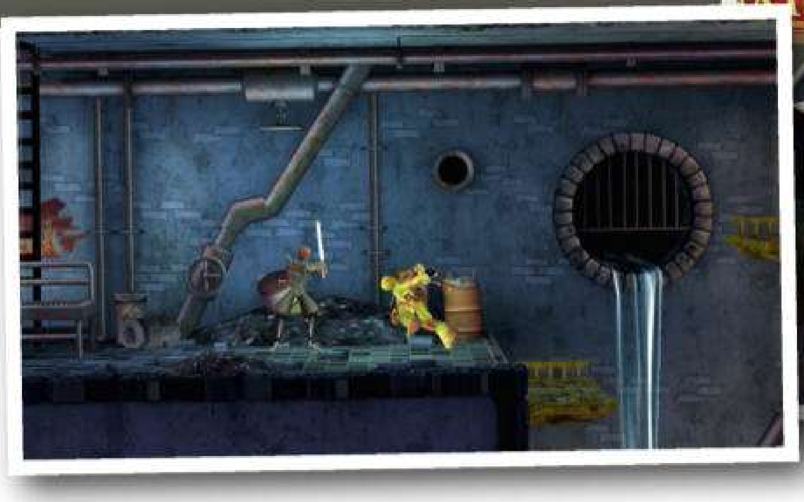
BRAWLHALLA

This free-to-play fighter from Ubisoft features dozens of crossover characters, allowing the Turtles to fight characters from *Adventure Time*, *Castlevania*, *GI Joe*, *Street Fighter* and *The Walking Dead*. As in *Smite*, they're premium skins for existing characters.

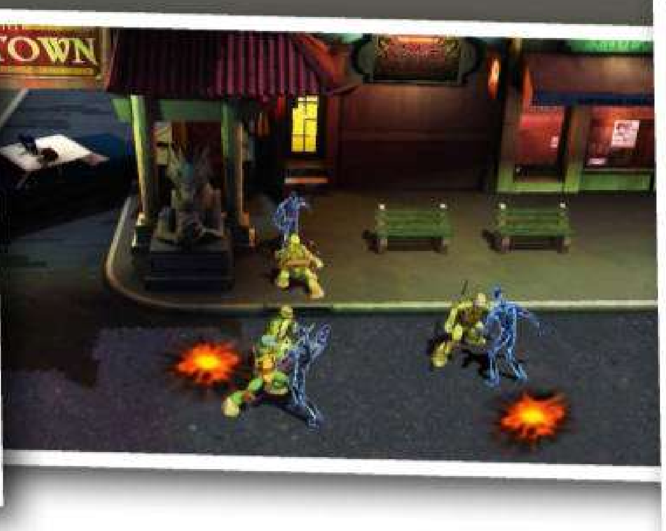


NICKELODEON ALL-STARS BRAWL

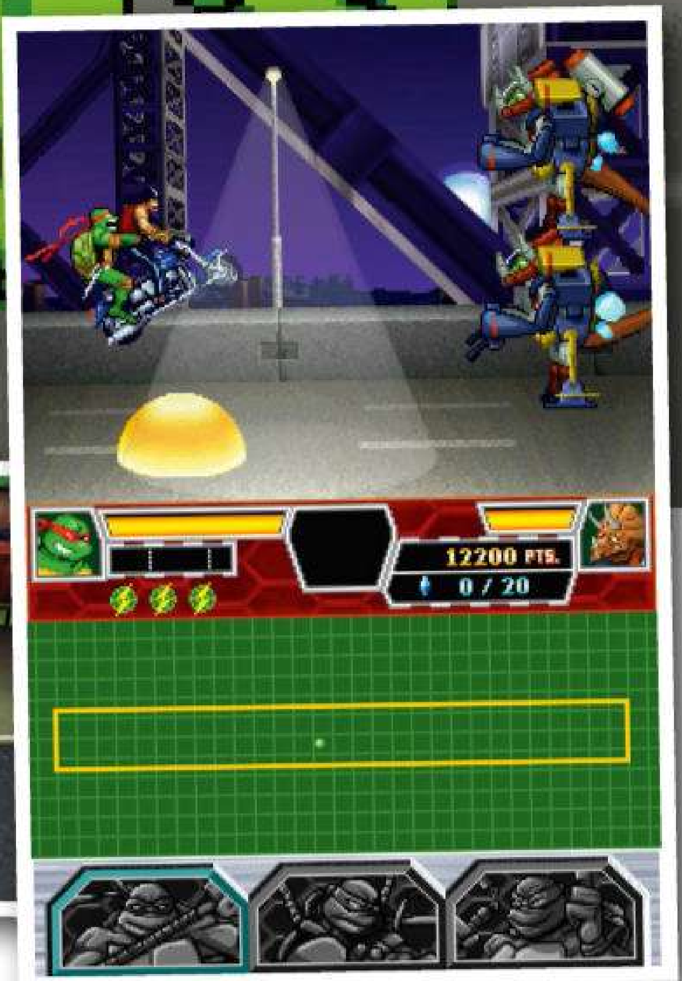
Imagine *Super Smash Bros*, but with the Turtles fighting against the cast of – oh wait, we've done that already. We appreciate that it allows us to chop Spongebob into cushion stuffing, and to show Garfield that pizza always beats lasagne.



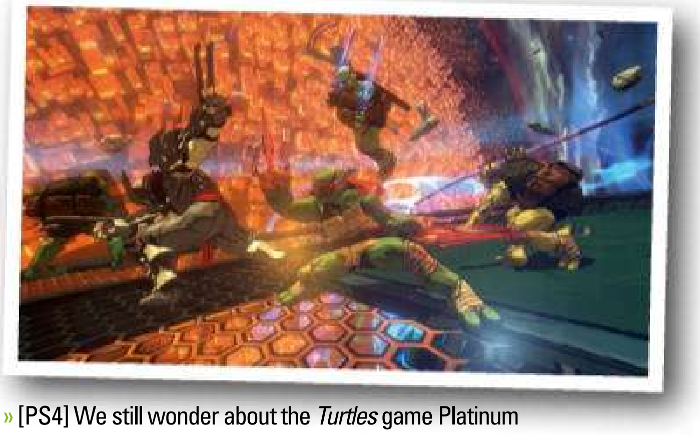
» [PS3] WayForward has made great games including the *Shantae* series, so it's unclear what went wrong here.



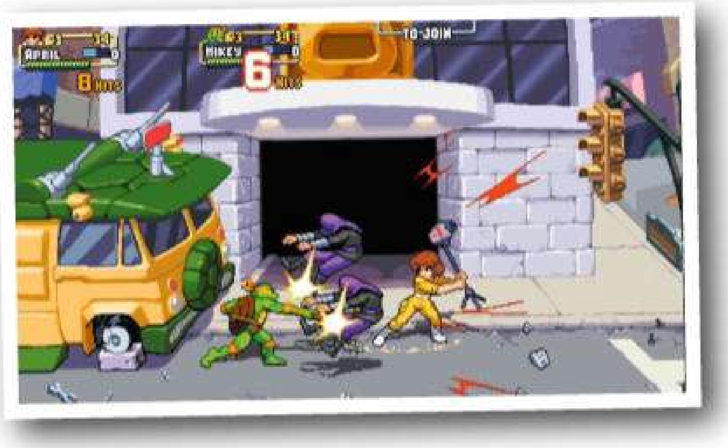
» [Xbox 360] We're surprised that *Nickelodeon Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* got a physical release over *Out Of The Shadows*.



» [DS] Catching a ride with Casey Jones is certainly one way to have a wild night.



» [PS4] We still wonder about the *Turtles* game Platinum could have done with more time and resources.



» [Switch] Fun fact: Ghostface Killah and Raekwon are on the soundtrack to *Shredder's Revenge*.

Thankfully, the Turtles soon got back on top form. Raw Thrills delivered an arcade beat-'em-up in 2018, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, which Arcade Heroes described as "just like an early Nineties brawler" and "totally worthy of a 'cowabunga!'" Two big projects arrived in 2022, one of which was Konami's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Cowabunga Collection*, discussed in the boxout, Delivery? No Collection. The other was DotEmu's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge*. It's dripping with nostalgic appeal thanks to its pixel art and Tee Lopes' soundtrack, but the retro connections go deeper. Speaking to *PC Gamer*, DotEmu CEO Cyrille Imbert noted that *Streets Of Rage 4*'s success "reassured us that beat-'em-ups could still be a thing", while key staff at the developer Tribute Games had worked on the Game Boy Advance version of *TMNT* and felt that it "wasn't able to live up to its full potential".

Tribute's Jonathan Lavigne told *PC Gamer* that differentiating *Shredder's Revenge* from past efforts involved highlighting the differences between the characters. "We wanted to differentiate them more and more. We looked into translating their personalities more into their movesets. Some of it came from the animations, like the animators were excited and pushed for a move." The level design goal was for, "Each mission to feel like an episode of that TV show – self-contained but feeding into a larger story." Play felt that the result was "better than returning to the classics" and that the only major criticism was "too much faithfulness to *Turtles In Time*", awarding the game 8/10.

Seeing *Turtles* rise to prominence again has been fantastic to see, because it shows that it really is an elite licensed property. Many players will automatically think back to Konami's early efforts when *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* games come up in conversation, and while the likes of *TMNT* on the Game Boy Advance and *Shredder's Revenge* certainly build on the successes of those games, they also go to show that great *Turtles* games are not the preserve of a single company or a particular era. If you're having some friends over any time soon, bust out some extra controllers and something starring the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – you'll doubtless remind yourself that they're not just a perfect part of a pizza party, but ideal videogame heroes too. ✱

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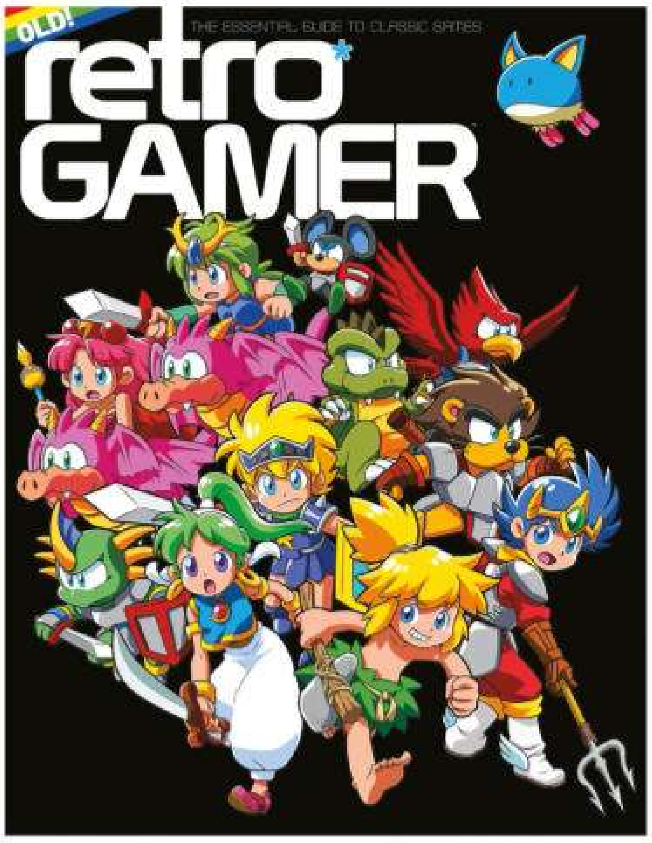
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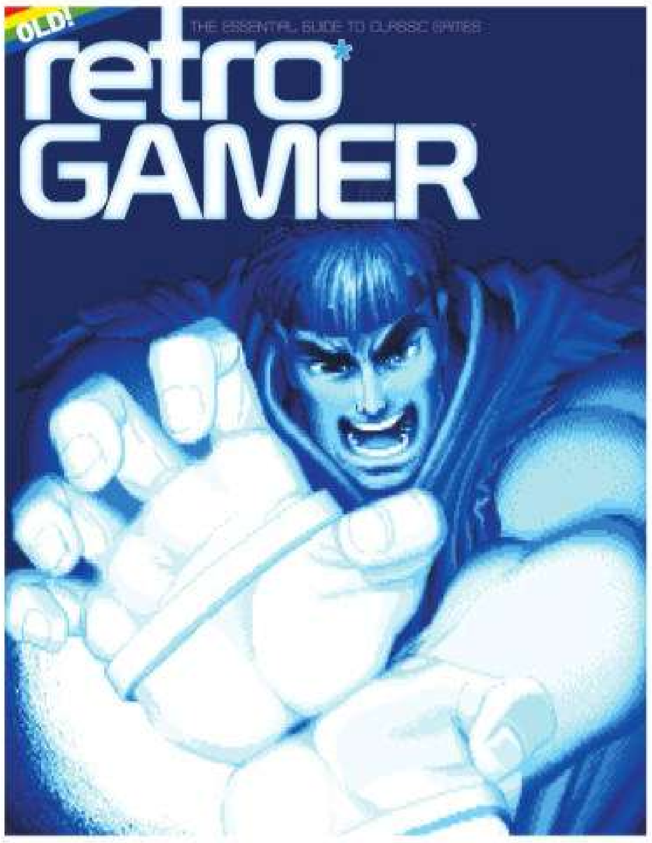
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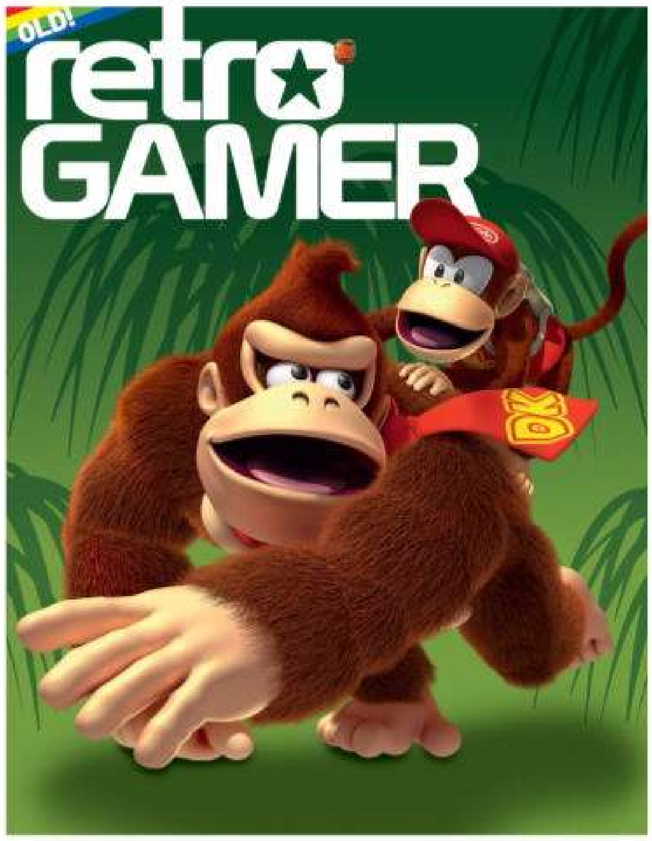
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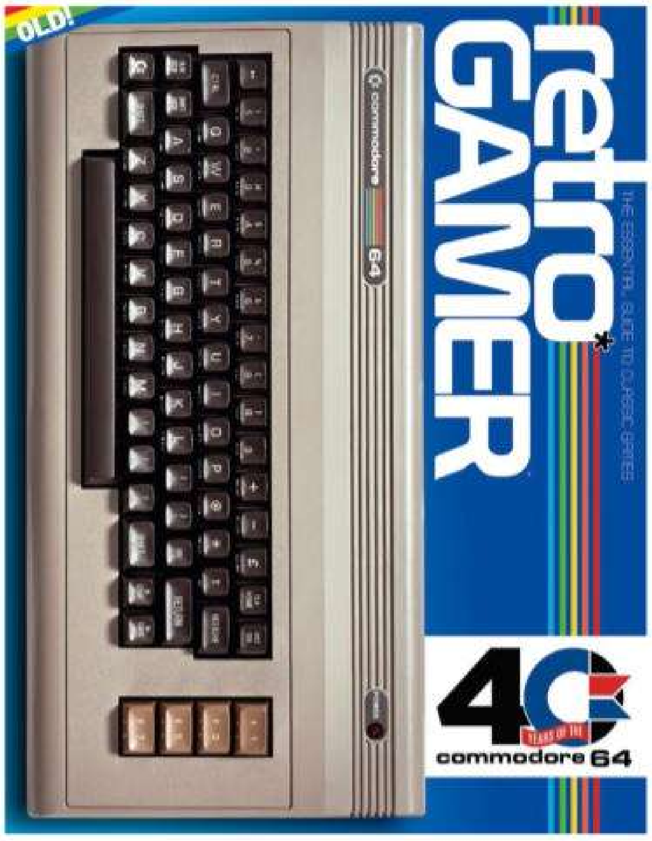
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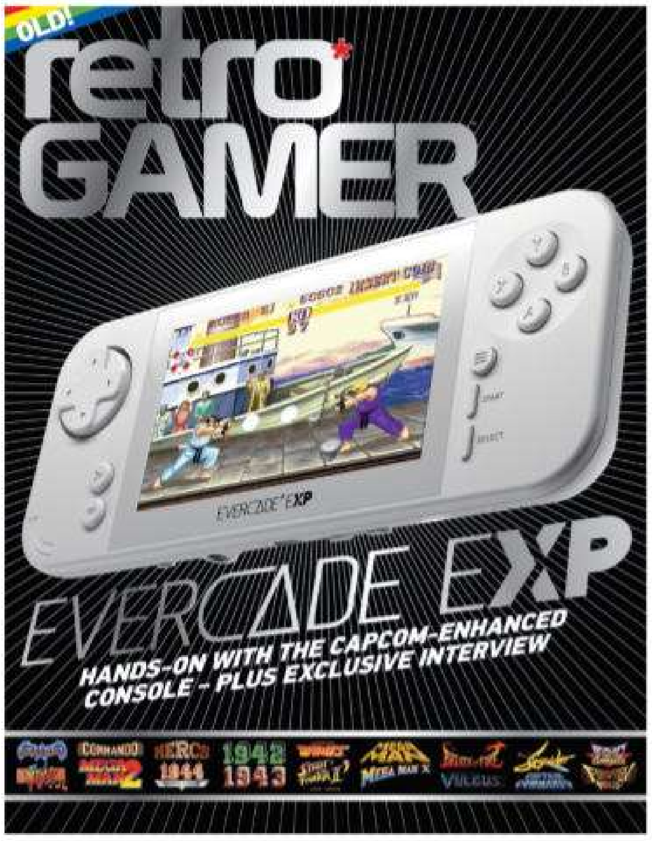
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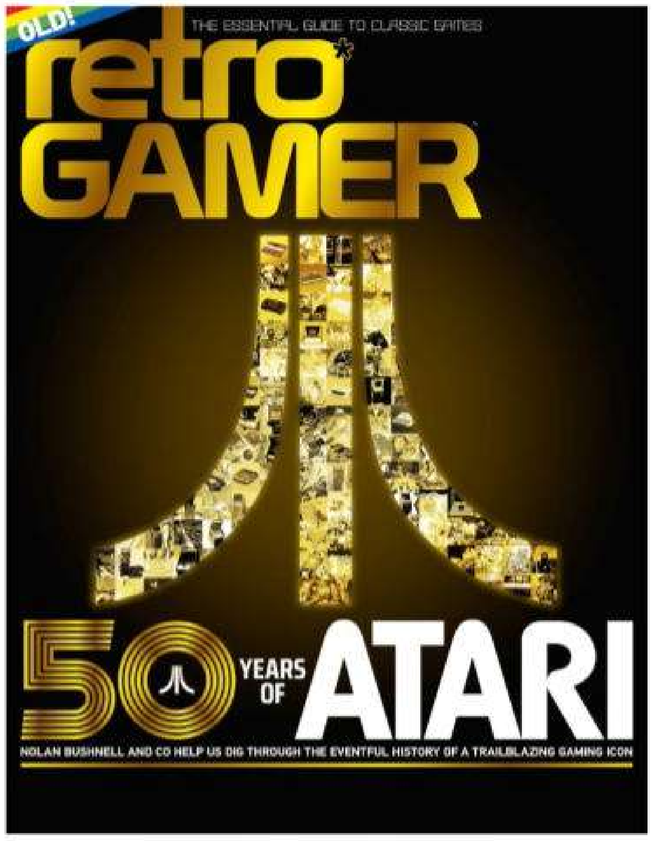
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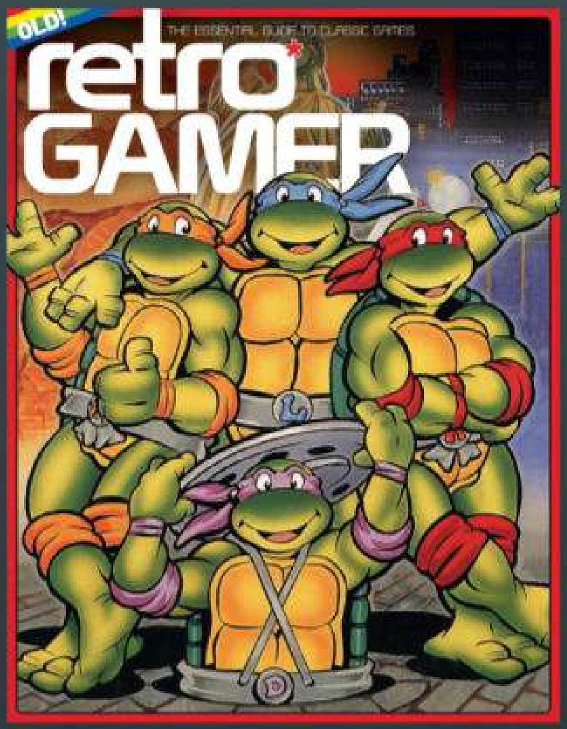

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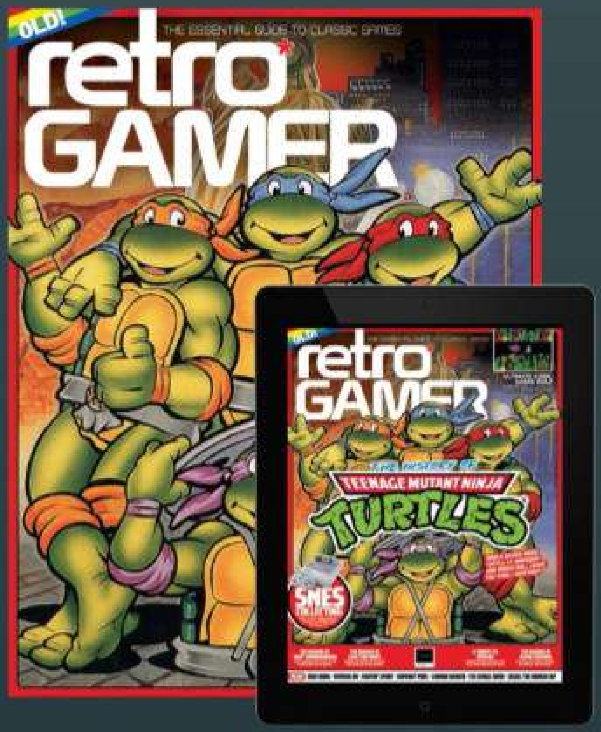

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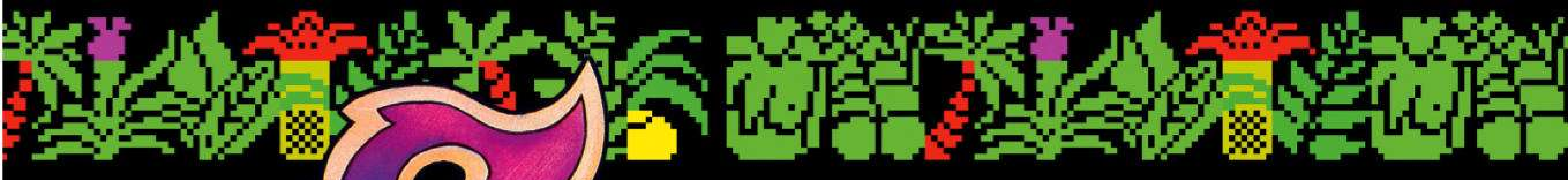
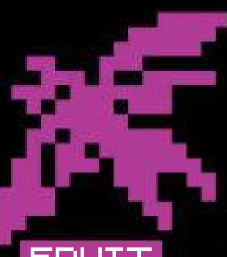
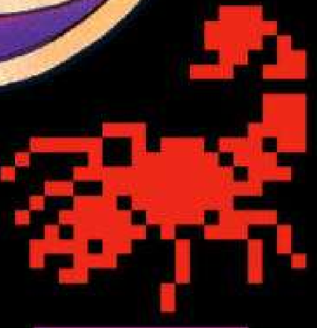


SABRE WULF

ULTIMATE GUIDE


FRUIT BAT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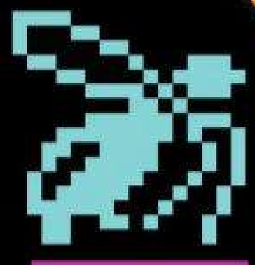
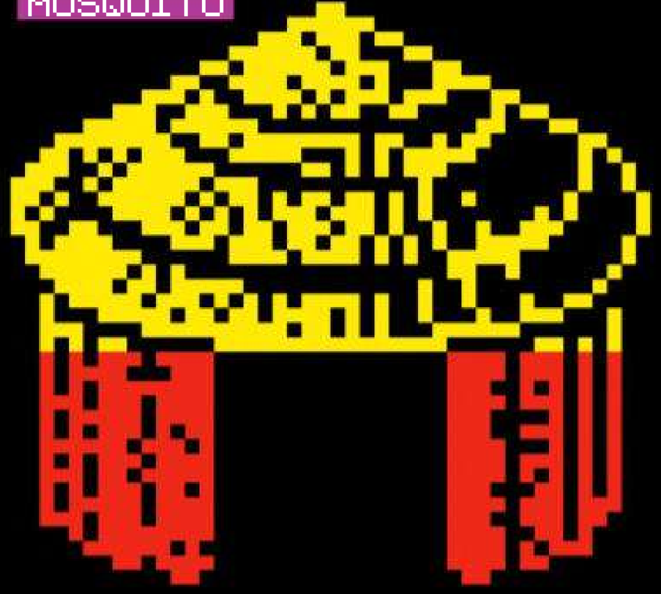
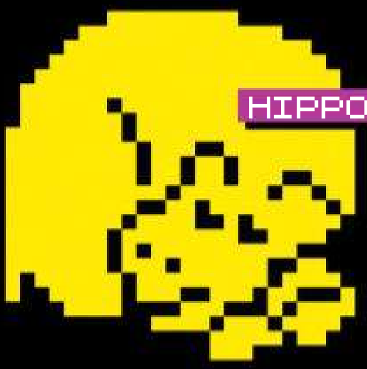

MOSQUITO

TWICE AS EXPENSIVE AS PREVIOUS ULTIMATE GAMES AND SOLD IN PRESTIGE PACKAGING, SABRE WULF WAS AN INTENSE SAFARI ADVENTURE RENDERED IN VIBRANT HUES. WELCOME TO ITS JUNGLE, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A GUIDE

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

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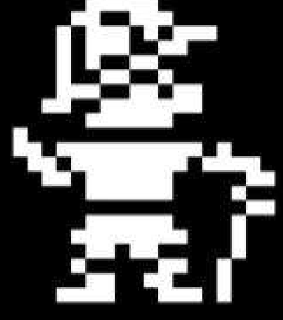


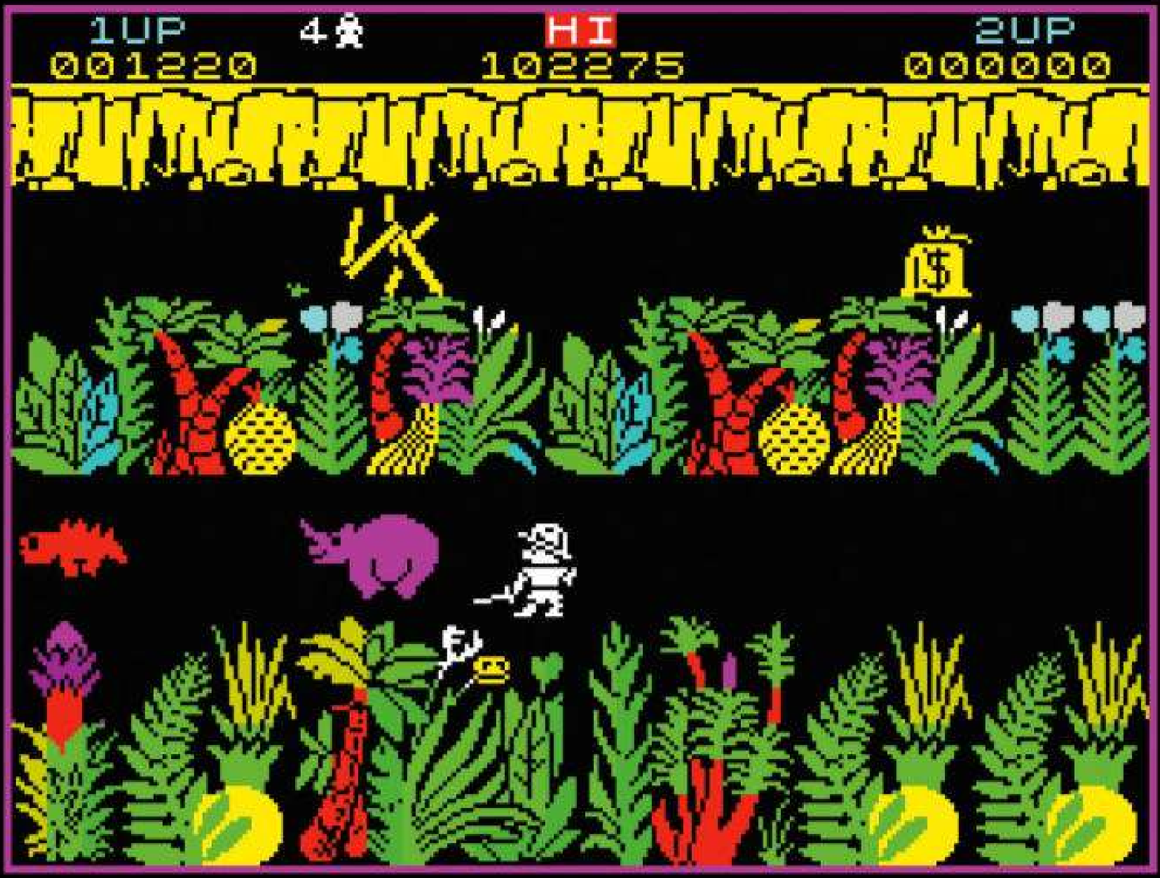
It's often forgotten that the UK home-computer boom of the early Eighties coincided with a recession. This general decline in economic activity, coupled with the fact that home-computer games were easily copied onto cheap blank cassettes, gave the emerging British games industry a major problem – piracy.

As one of the most popular new Spectrum developers of 1983, Ashby Computers & Graphics felt this drain on its profits more than most. And after releasing six hit titles on its Ultimate label in its first six months of trading, nothing more was heard from the firm until the spring of 1984. Even then, the computer magazines of the day were kept in the dark. All except for receiving a stylish but enigmatic full-page advert to run, which simply announced the name of the new Ultimate game – *Sabre Wulf,* and the fact that it would cost the then princely sum of £9.95.

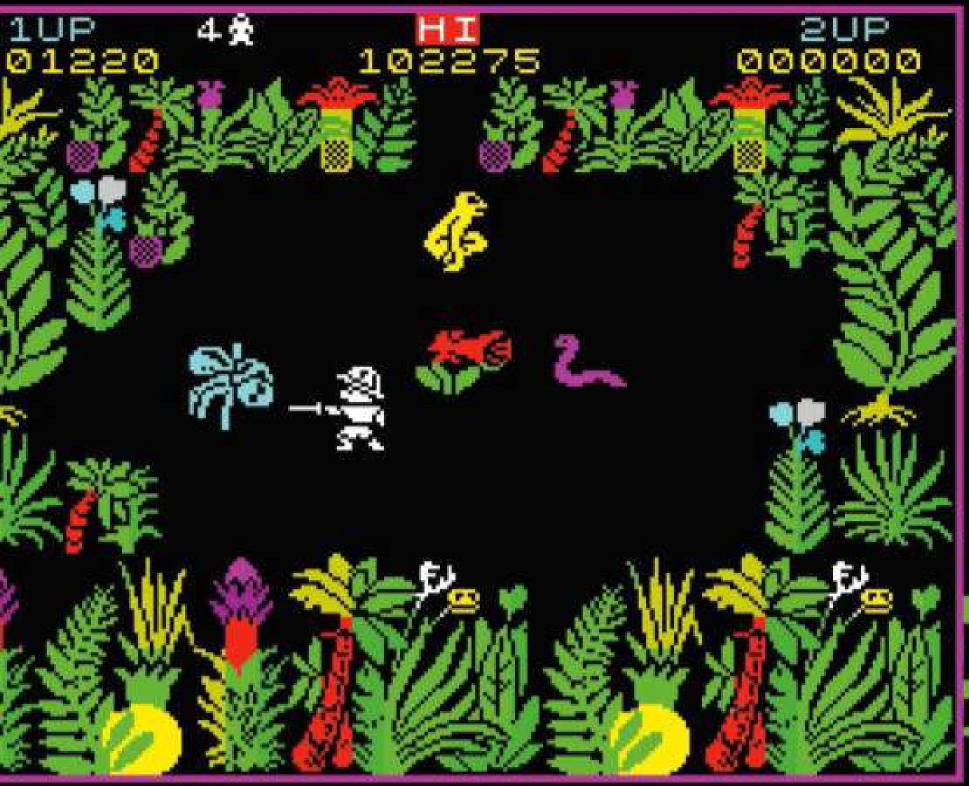
Previously, Ultimate titles had been sold for £5.50 – the going rate for UK computer games at the time, so effectively ACG had doubled its prices, and all without giving any details about its new release. The advert for *Sabre Wulf* didn't have a description of its features or gameplay, and there were no screenshots to pour over. So there was nothing to judge the game by other than its slick airbrushed logo and the very high standard of ACG's prior work. ▶

LIVING FLAME

> "I USED TO BORROW A SPECTRUM AT THE WEEKENDS FROM MR MICRO AND PLAYED GAMES ON IT, AND SABRE WULF WAS MY FAVOURITE"
> **Greg Duddle**



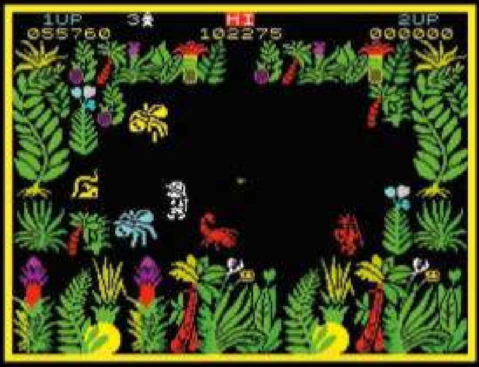
» [ZX Spectrum] The rhinos in *Sabre Wulf* are invulnerable, but you can see them off with your sword.



» [ZX Spectrum] You typically get surrounded by foes as soon as you start a game of *Sabre Wulf*.

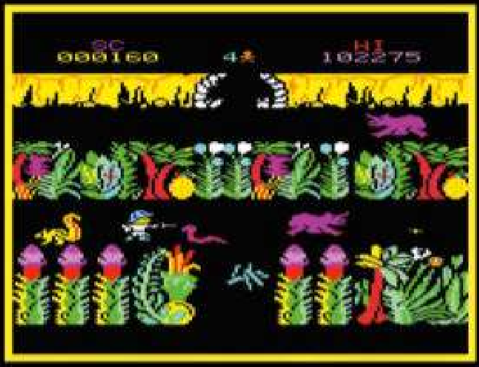
CONVERSION CAPERS

THE PROS AND CONS OF THE VARIOUS VERSIONS



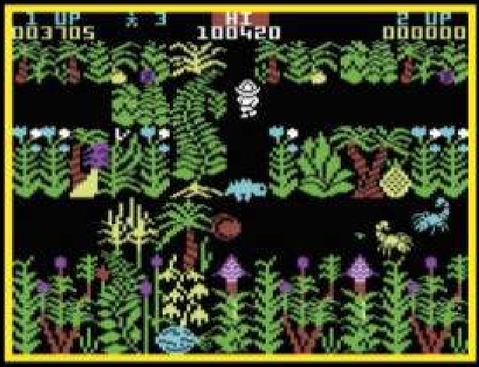
ZX SPECTRUM

■ The original is defined by its confined pathways, and the colourful graphics that border these. There's colour clash when Sabreman interacts with his foes, but it's not that noticeable. Its pre and post-game tunes are lively, and its sound effects are subtle but effective.



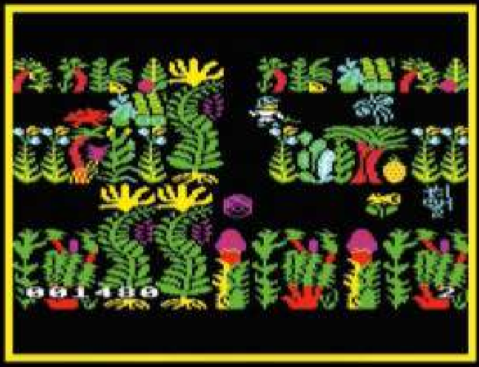
AMSTRAD CPC

■ Likely adapted by Ultimate, the Amstrad version uses a low-res, multicolour mode, which allows its sprites to have more colours than the original's. Its music isn't multi-channel, instead it's identical to the Spectrum's chiptunes, but its sound effects are more musical.



C64

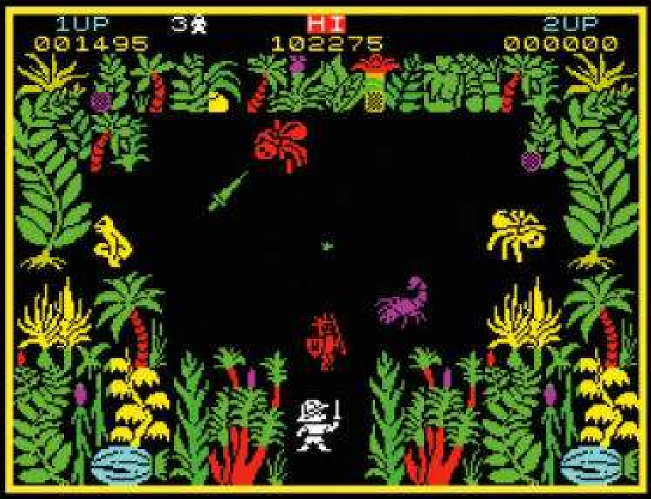
■ Published by Firebird, the C64 title depicts its sprites in equally high resolution to the original, but it has blockier backgrounds. Its music and sound effects are the best of any version, and unlike the original, Sabreman stands next to your choice of controls pre-game.



BBC MICRO

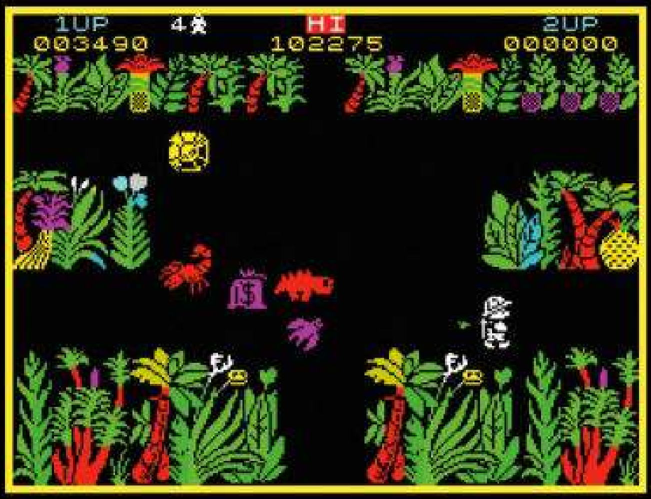
■ Converted by Paul Proctor, the BBC *Sabre Wulf* features a multicoloured Sabreman and single-colour enemies. Its pre-game music isn't multi-channel, but its sound effects are almost as good as the C64 version. However, its score and lives are squeezed into the background graphics.

SURVIVING SABRE WULF


1UP 001495
3
HI 102275
2UP 000000

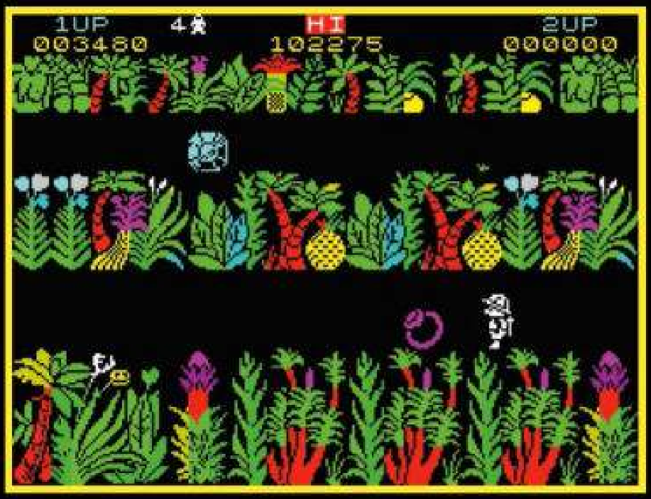
KNOW YOUR LIMITS

■ You don't have an energy bar in *Sabre Wulf*; if you take a hit you lose a life. You only have four to begin with, and extra ones can be scarce, so use some caution. That said, if you sheathe your sword you can often run right through screens before any enemies have spawned.


1UP 003490
4
HI 102275
2UP 000000

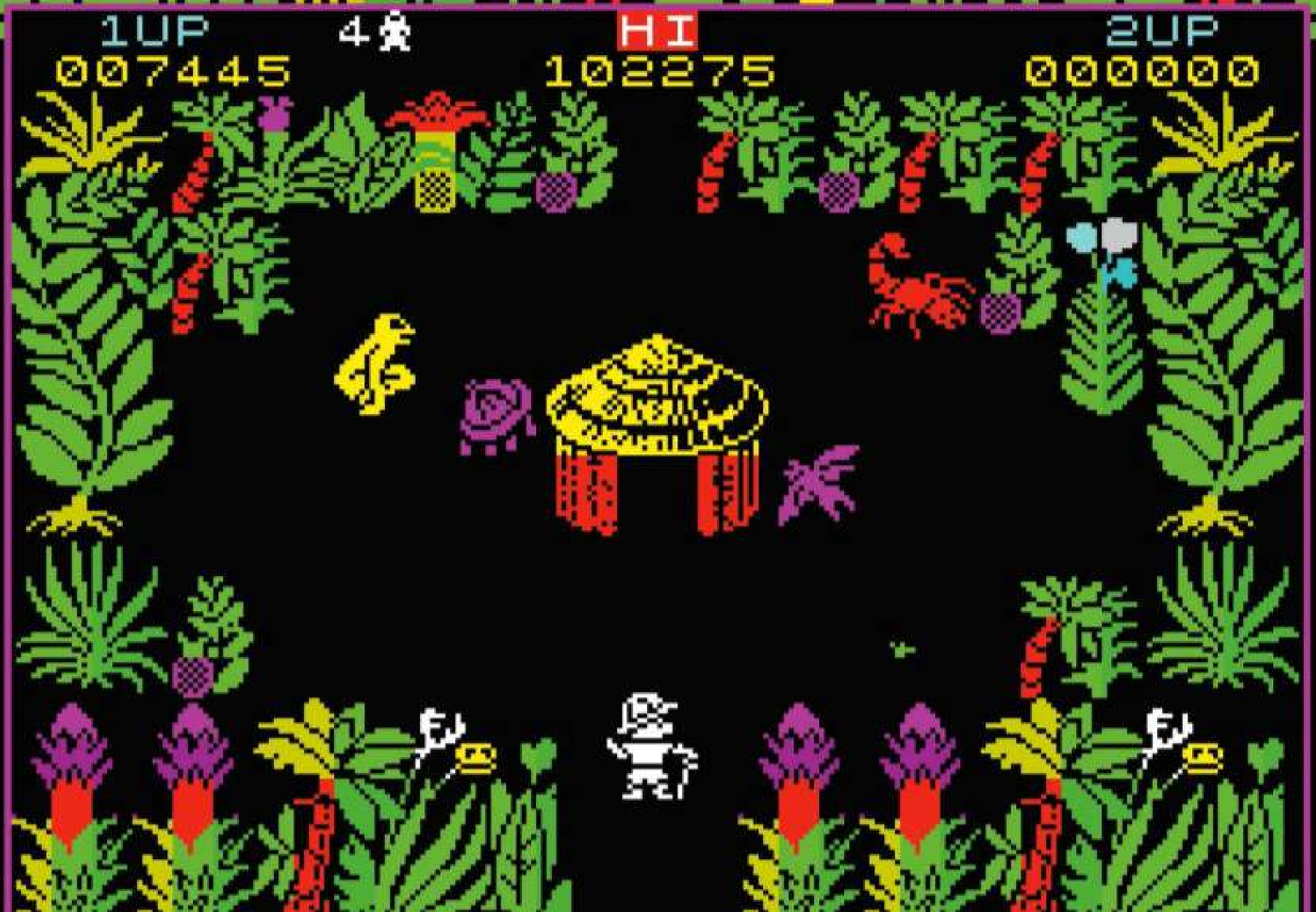
MAKE A MAP

■ There are few identical screens in *Sabre Wulf*, but the background graphics from screen to screen are similar enough that it's very easy to get lost. The trick is to make a map based on your repeated attempts, but bear in mind that amulet pieces are rarely in the same places.


1UP 003480
4
HI 102275
2UP 000000

TREASURE HUNT

■ The aforementioned amulet is your main priority, but *Sabre Wulf* is full of other treasures. Extra lives are rare, but appear more often as you get further into the game's jungle maze. There are also various collectibles such as treasure chests that simply boost your score.

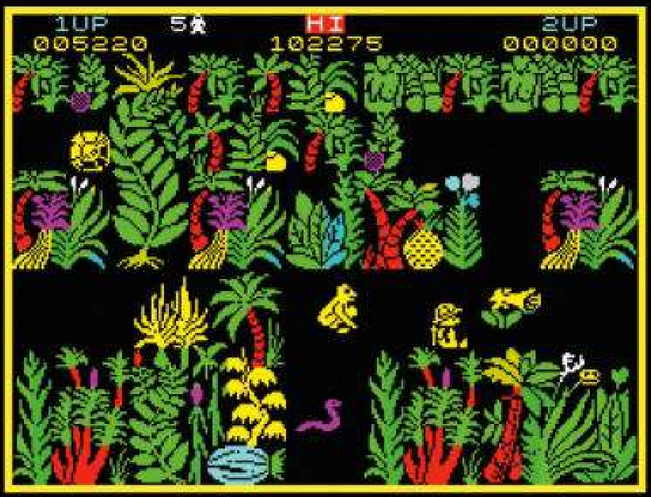

1UP 007445
4
HI 102275
2UP 000000

» [ZX Spectrum] *Sabre Wulf*'s jungle huts look like they have a purpose, but they're purely decorative.

1UP 005415
HI 102275
2UP 000000

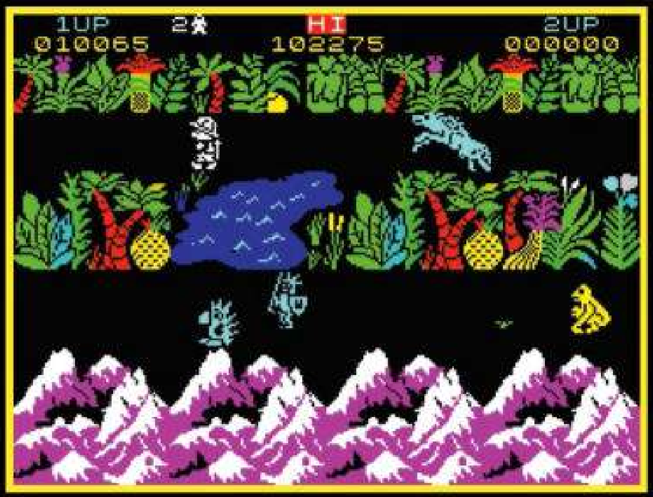
1UP 009300
3
HI 102275
2UP 000000

HOW TO GET THROUGH THE ULTIMATE JUNGLE ADVENTURE



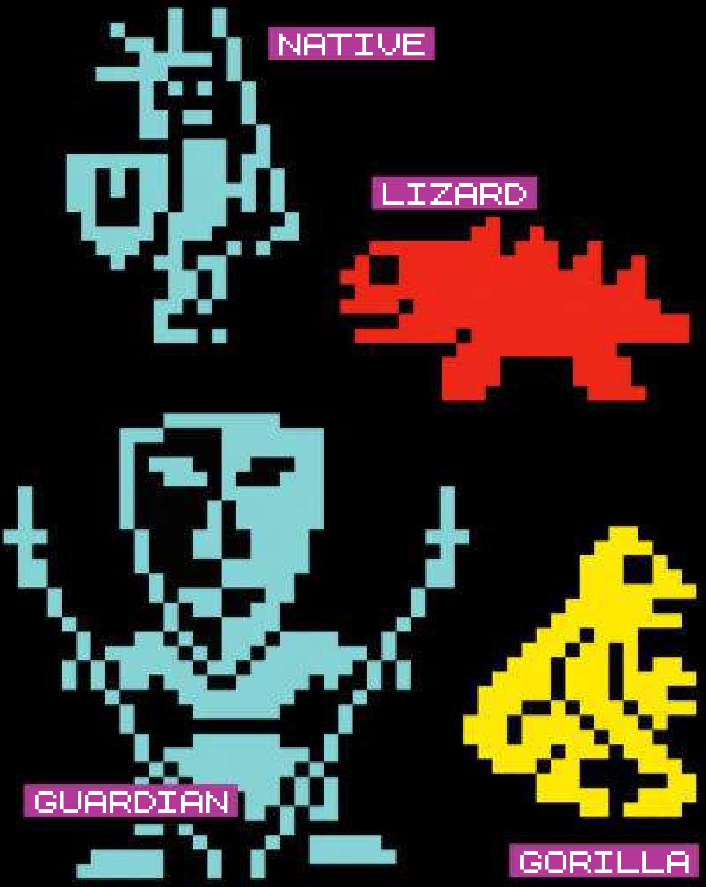
FLOWER POWER

■ Depending on their colour, *Sabre Wulf*'s orchids have different temporary effects. The red ones make you invulnerable, the blue ones make you fast and the yellow ones stun you. The purple ones reverse your controls, while the white ones neutralise the effects of the others.



FIGHT OR FLIGHT

■ You have to deal with *Sabre Wulf*'s invulnerable foes differently. You can scare away the hippos and rhinos by grazing them with your sword, but the wulf and natives have to be avoided. To make the living flame vanish, you just leave the screen it's on and then re-enter it.



▶ Popular multiformat magazine *Computer & Video Games* pushed ACG for details, and just as *Sabre Wulf* was due to be released the monthly publication revealed what little it had learned. *Sabre Wulf* was to be the first of a new range of Ultimate games for the 48K Spectrum and Commodore 64 that would represent "a gigantic leap forward in games entertainment". It didn't disappoint.

Six months prior to *Sabre Wulf,* ACG had released the incredibly successful *Atic Atac,* and it was a measure of just how far ahead it was of other arcade adventures that it was the only game that reviewers could really compare *Sabre Wulf* to. This was all the more understandable because the two games shared some core gameplay, although they were very different in almost every other respect. On the one hand, both games had numerous single-screen stages populated by spawning enemies, and each had objects to assemble that would allow you to escape their hostile environments. But on the other hand, the mechanics and aesthetics built on these common foundations differed greatly depending on which title you were playing. So whereas *Atic Atac* was set in the many rooms of an improbably large castle, *Sabre Wulf* took place in the darkest depths of a sprawling jungle. Besides these contrasting settings, *Sabre Wulf* had screens that accommodated multiple paths that were inaccessible from one another, unlike *Atic Atac,* which consisted entirely of open-plan locations.

Perhaps more noticeable was how *Sabre Wulf*'s protagonist, combat, collectables and opponents varied from its predecessor's. In *Atic Atac,* you had the choice of playing as one of three heroes, each with their own unique ranged weapon and ability to access specific secret doorways, whereas *Sabre Wulf* had just one player character, Sabreman, with a hand-to-hand weapon, and no hidden exits. As well as lives, *Atic Atac*'s adventurers had energy bars, and pick-ups to replenish them, unlike *Sabre Wulf,* whose protagonist simply had a set number of lives, although extras could be obtained. In terms of other collectibles, *Atic Atac* had colour-coded keys and doors, where *Sabre Wulf* had colour-coded flowers that either powered-up or handicapped its hero. The big-bads of both games differed too, in that *Atic Atac*'s mayors could be defeated, as long as you had the required weapon, in contrast to *Sabre Wulf*'s bosses, which just had to be avoided at all costs.

> "I RECEIVED TWO BIG LISTINGS. ONE WAS A Z80 CODE LISTING, AND THE OTHER WAS GRAPHICS DATA, WHICH TOOK A LONG TIME TO PUZZLE OUT"
> Greg Duddle

A cost of a different kind was discussed in almost all of *Sabre Wulf*'s reviews, the aforementioned steep price that the ▶

DEVELOPER Q&A

GREG DUDDLE ON CONVERTING SABRE WULF TO THE C64

How familiar were you with *Sabre Wulf* before converting it?

When I got the job I already *loved* the game. I used to borrow a Spectrum at the weekends from Mr Micro and played games on it, and *Sabre Wulf* was my favourite at the time. So when I was asked if I wanted to convert it to the C64 it was a no-brainer! I *loved* the idea.

How did you get the job?

I think it was because I'd made a game called *Willow Pattern*. It was for Firebird too, and it wasn't a million miles from being the same type of game. So Firebird must have recognised that if we could do what we did with it then we were the perfect people to do *Sabre Wulf*.

How much contact did you have with the Ultimate team?

Well that's easy – I had none. I worked for Mr Micro, whose boss was Jim Gregory. He did all of the deals. So I never met them or had any contact with them. It was all done through my boss. I did provide code updates every now and then – versions of the game, but he sent them on.

What help did you get from Ultimate?

I received two big listings. One was a Z80 code listing, and the other was graphics data, which took a long time to puzzle out. There was a little bit of information there that I could use, but the rest of it was just transferring what I could see on-screen in the Spectrum original.

What challenges did you have?

The trickiest part was going through Ultimate's Z80 code, because there were a few comments in there, but not many. So I had to work out what was going on at each stage. But it was very cleverly written. There were some very neat tricks in there, and you could work out what they were doing and code them in 6502.

What concessions did you make?

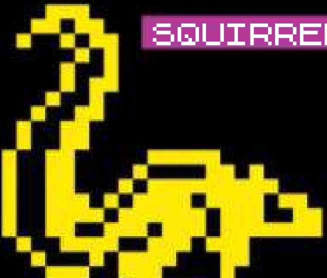
I used a totally different graphics mode from the Spectrum, because for the range of colours that I needed I had to use double-pixels. I had to design a couple of tools for converting the graphics – a sprite editor and so on. For the rest I used a Koala Pad.

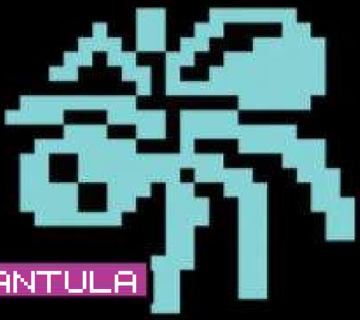
Why weren't the sprites multicoloured?

Single-colour sprites had single-pixel resolution, and Ultimate's graphics for the creatures were wonderful. Of course, the original had high-resolution backgrounds as well. There was a nice mode on the Spectrum where you could choose two colours per character square, but I didn't have that on the C64.

Why didn't you convert more Ultimate titles?

So far as I know we were never offered another Ultimate game. I don't know why that was the case, unless Ultimate wasn't happy. But I don't remember receiving any complaints. I thought I'd done quite a decent job of doing a one-to-one conversion.


SQUIRREL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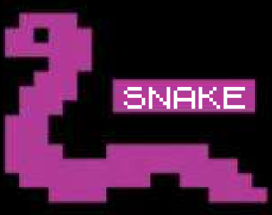
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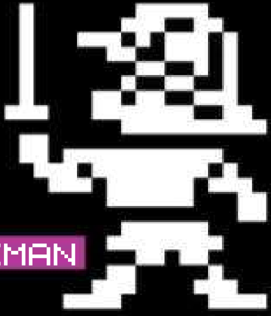
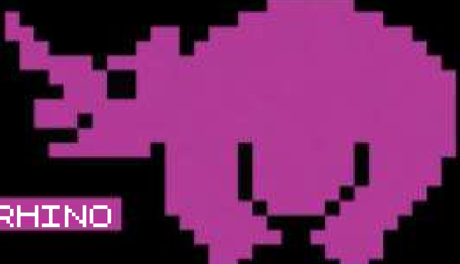
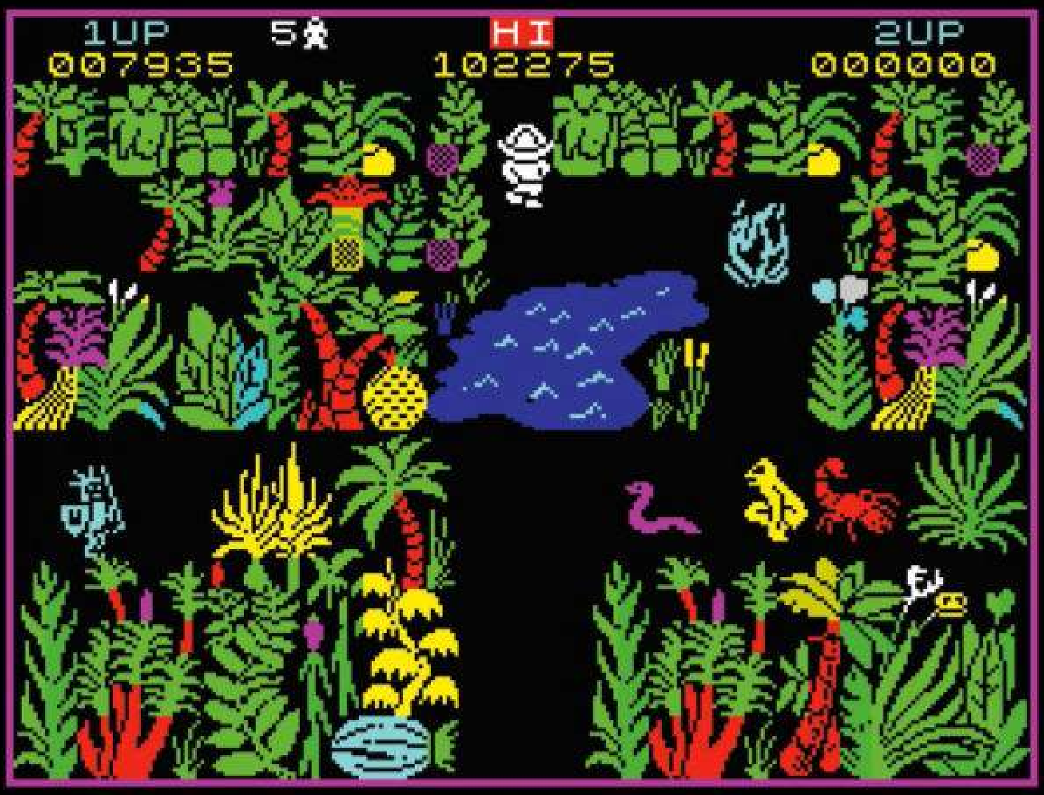
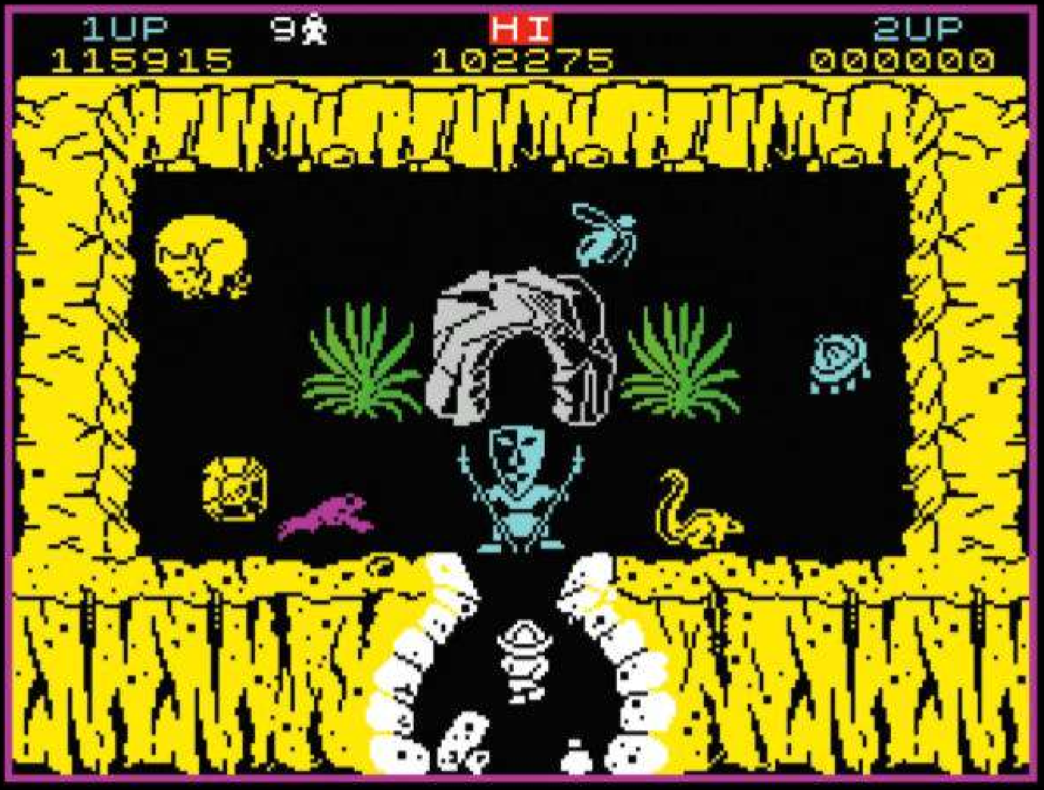

SABREMAN


RHINO

» [ZX Spectrum] If you're on one of *Sabre Wulf*'s screens too long an indestructible flame chases you.





» [ZX Spectrum] You can't escape from *Sabre Wulf*'s jungle without four pieces of a sacred amulet.

game was being sold at, but as well as this and pointed comparisons with *Atic Atac*, even the most sceptical of magazine critics acknowledged that Ultimate had outdone itself with its latest offering. This view was reflected in *Sabre Wulf*'s speedy ascent to the top of the sales charts, with the Ultimate Spectrum title going on to sell more than 350,000 copies. Given the scale of its success, it was inevitable that it was going to be made available for other computers, although the small size of ACG meant that it was far too busy to produce conversions for systems with different processors. Artist/founder Tim Stamper did, however, find time to design an attractive ornate border for its cover art.

In terms of porting duties, freelancer Paul Proctor was trusted with the BBC Micro version, which came out in early 1985 to much applause. Some months later, a C64 adaptation was licensed to Firebird Software, which then sub-licensed the project to Mr Micro Limited. The conversion process was assigned to coder/artist Greg Duddle, and released in early 1986. By this point, the original had been around for 18 months, which caused the *Zzap!64* critics to give the C64 version low marks, although this wasn't considered by other reviewers, many of whom sung its praises.

Around the same time as the Commodore 64 game saw the light of day, the Amstrad iteration of the Ocean Software compilation *They Sold A Million* arrived in shops. This featured a version of *Sabre Wulf* that was most likely converted by ACG itself, given the fact that the Amstrad computer had a Z80 CPU like the Spectrum's – making it a relatively easy port, and given that the initials on its high-score table were those of the Ultimate team. Whoever its author was, the CPC *Sabre Wulf* was well-received by critics, both when it appeared on Ocean's multi-title release and when ACG later brought out the conversion as a stand-alone title.

> "I USED A TOTALLY DIFFERENT GRAPHICS MODE FROM THE SPECTRUM, BECAUSE FOR THE RANGE OF COLOURS THAT I NEEDED I HAD TO USE DOUBLE-PIXELS"
> **Greg Duddle**

FROG

While these adaptations of the original game were being released, ACG was busily working on three Spectrum sequels, all starring protagonist Sabreman. The first two – *Underwurlde* and *Knight Lore* – were both essentially platformers. The former was side-on and largely based around vertical ascents – and completing it informed players that other games in the series were planned, whereas the latter title had a novel isometric viewpoint that was like nothing before seen on a UK home computer. Both were massive hits when they came out in December 1984, and conversions for other systems followed in the subsequent year.

The spring of 1986 saw the release of a fourth Sabreman adventure – *Pentagram*, another isometric outing with similar challenges to *Knight Lore* coupled with fresh overall objectives. Mixed reviews for the Spectrum original ranged between 50% to 100%, and a faithful MSX conversion followed.

The fifth and final adventure for Sabreman was later mothballed by ACG founders Tim and Chris Stamper, as they transitioned to their new console-focussed firm Rare, and so little or no work was done on the mysterious *Mire Mare*.

That's not to say that this downbeat footnote tarnishes *Sabre Wulf*'s reputation in any way. The colourful arcade adventure is still immense fun to play, and a serious challenge for all but those with the fastest reactions, keenest map-making skills and dogged determination to explore and escape its vibrant but unforgiving jungle. *

THE MAKING OF

The·Fear

STORM II

FEATURING A HACKNEYED PLOT AND SWORD-AND-SORCERY COVER ART, THE SEQUEL TO STORM WAS THE COMPUTER-GAME EQUIVALENT OF A DEATHSTALKER MOVIE – WHICH MEANT IT WAS CHEAP YET CHEERFUL. JOIN US AS WE TELL THE TALE BEHIND THE FEAR

WORDS BY MARTYN CARROLL

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** MASTERTRONIC
- » **DEVELOPER**: THE FIRM
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PLATFORM:** AMSTRAD CPC
- » **GENRE**: MAZE GAME

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BRIDGE TO THE EAST
SYSTEM: BBC MICRO
YEAR: 1984

STORM (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1986

COMBAT ZONE
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

The original *Storm* was an unsurprising hit when published by Mastertronic on the Amstrad CPC in 1986. We say unsurprising because it would have been more of a shock if this budget *Gauntlet* clone, released months before the official full-price *Gauntlet* conversion, had failed. It went on to sell 48,000 copies on the CPC, with total sales hitting almost 200,000 when converted to six other formats. Mastertronic expected this success, as the inlay refers to the game as 'Part 1'. Further parts were clearly coming.

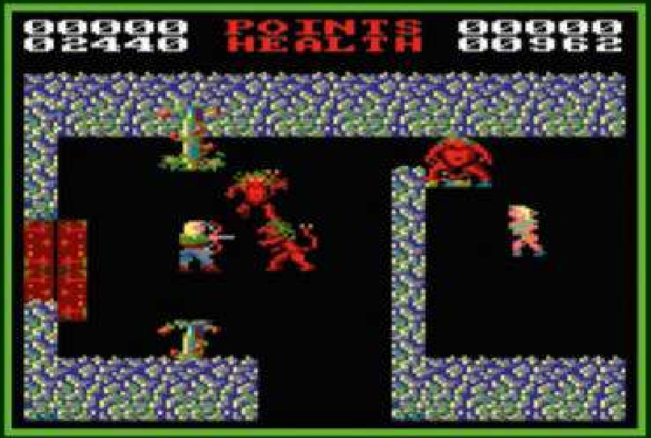
Working on the sequel was something the creators relished. "We loved *Storm* and were very proud of it, but knew that we could do better," says programmer Kevin Shrapnell, who was one third of The Firm alongside fellow programmer Mike Talbot and designer Seán Martin. "The biggest and most obvious improvement was the visual upgrade," he continues. "We adopted a side-view approach which allowed us to get away from the top-down crab-like rotation and animation of *Storm*. In addition we planned out the whole map and setting – the design was more connected rather than room by room. This meant that the visuals made more sense, had continuity and were better connected to the story."

The story was once again based on Seán's fantasy poetry. Taking place at the same time as the events of *Storm*, Princess Silver and her companion Prince Frost must locate the Fear, an all-powerful item around which such tales revolve (and the source of the game's title). Building on the original, the sequel takes place in a variety of indoor and outdoor locations, with the overall aim of returning the Fear to an old monastery.

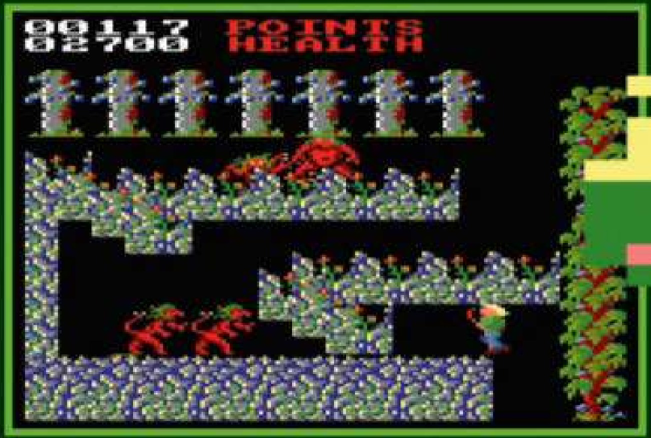
We hear about games being written rapidly back then and *The Fear* was no exception. "We set ourselves a target to write the sequel in one month," says Kevin. "We started on 1 August and missed our deadline by a few hours, finishing at 4am on 1 September. We jumped in a car and headed to Glastonbury Tor to watch the sun rise, then sent the gold master to Mastertronic later that day. " Although written in mere weeks, Seán

» These days Seán Martin, the 'ideas man' at The Firm, is a published author and filmmaker.

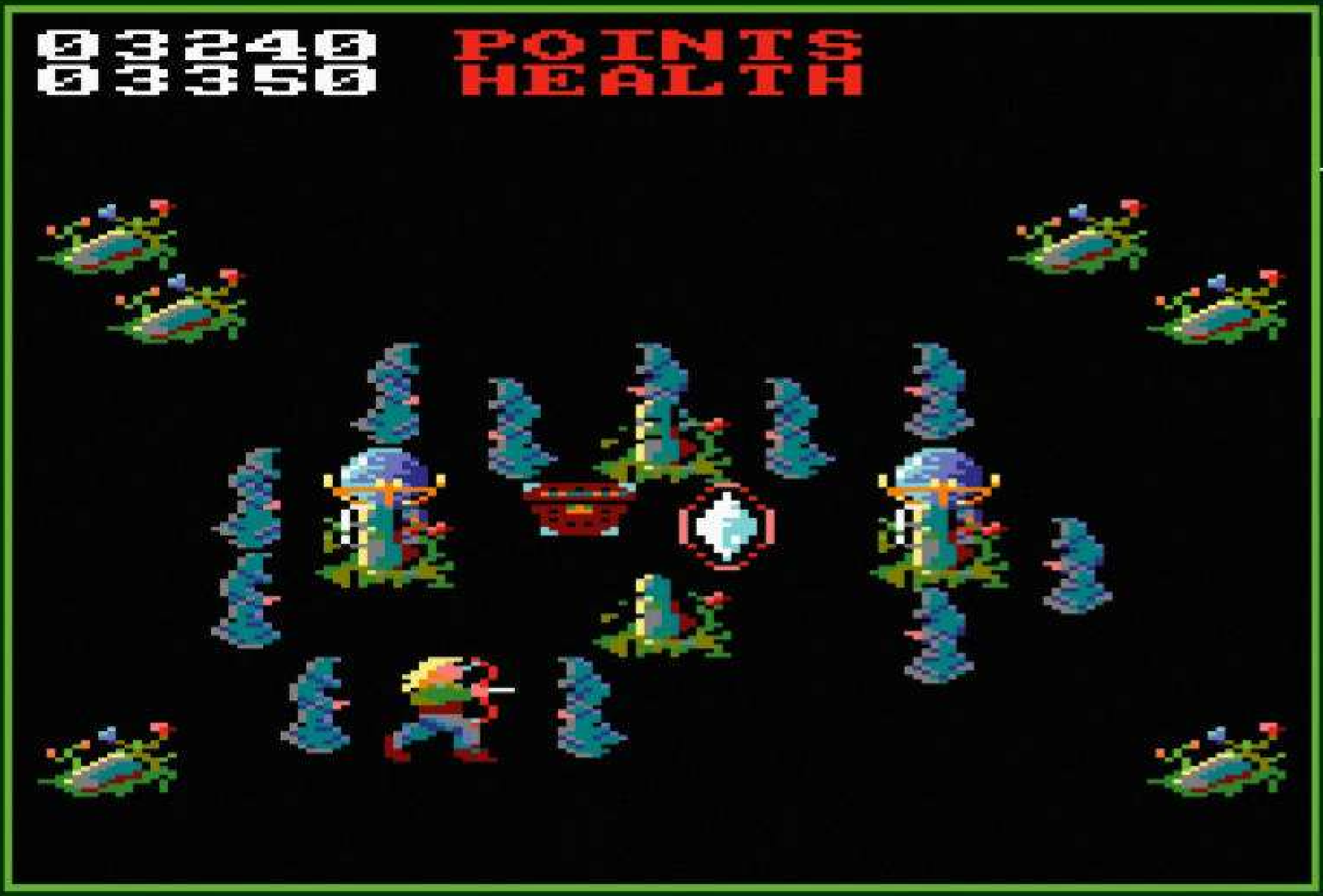
» Kevin Shrapnell programmed *The Fear* alongside Mike Talbot. He's presently the CEO of Magic Fuel Games.



» [Amstrad CPC] As with the original, the sequel supports two playable characters, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

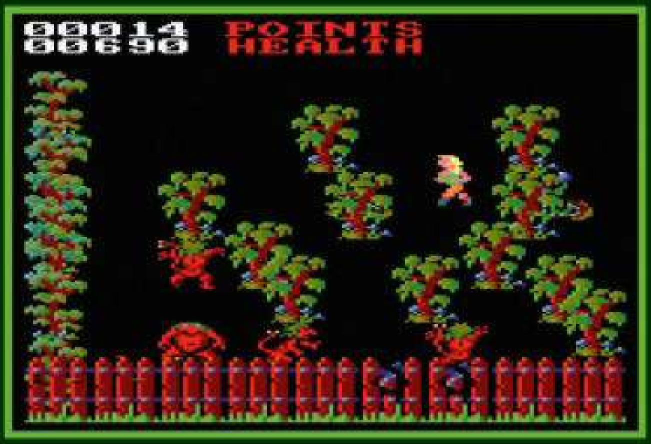


» [Amstrad CPC] Many of the screens have a deceptive maze-like quality about them.

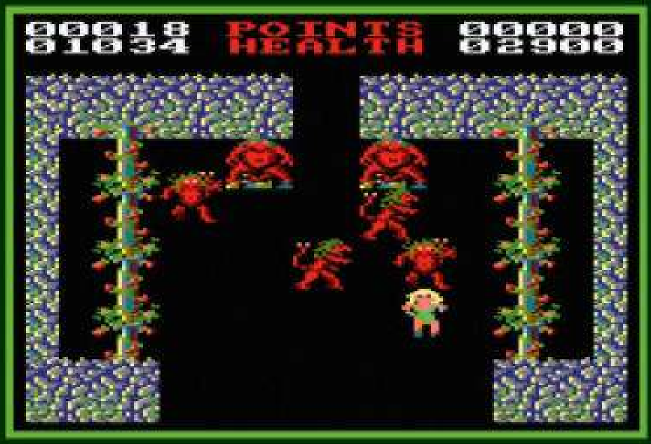


» [Amstrad CPC] Finding the Fear is one thing. Defeating the fiendish hooded figures that guard it is another.

» Photo evidence of the boys watching the sun come up over Glastonbury, having just wrapped work on *The Fear.*



» [Amstrad CPC] Unlike *Gauntlet, The Fear* doesn't scroll, which reduces the technical demands of the game.



» [Amstrad CPC] If one player exits a room, the other has to fight it out alone. Not that we'd ever do that on purpose, for kicks, of course.

> "WE LOVED STORM AND WERE VERY PROUD OF IT, BUT KNEW THAT WE COULD DO BETTER"
> KEVIN SHRAPNELL

hasn't forgotten *The Fear.* "I remember working on the sequel in the summer of 1986 at Mike's house. Like *Storm*, it was inspired by my fantasy world. It was a more ambitious game and it was going to be made available on other machines, but those versions never appeared. I don't know why." Kevin believes he knows why. "We wrote the CPC version and provided the source code to Mastertronic to port, but the developers who promised to do the work allegedly skipped the country to Spain and no ports were ever completed. This was a shame as *The Fear* was a much more attractive and balanced game. Being only on the CPC wasn't really enough to generate the success we'd hoped for."

Indeed, *The Fear* sold just 13,667 copies when released on Mastertronic's premium MAD label in the spring of 1987. This was around a quarter of what the original sold on the CPC. "We never saw much money from it," admits Kevin. "We were paid a £2,500 advance for it, and on that basis we didn't recoup. We did have a slightly higher royalty as well, as it retailed for £2.99 rather than £1.99 – which might also have been a factor in the sales. The market had become saturated with *Gauntlet* clones too."

The game reviewed well – *Amstrad Action* called it "A worthy sequel to *Storm*" and awarded it 70% – but no further instalments were to follow. "I don't recall discussions about doing a third game," says Seán. "There were three poems in my trilogy. The third poem was called *The Silent Field* and told of the big showdown between light and darkness, but I don't think we ever considered turning that into a game. We had too many other projects on the go by then."

"I think the disappointment over *The Fear* might have taken the wind out of our sails," adds Kevin, referring to a potential *Storm III.* "We also had a couple of new people join the team and that brought new creative ideas and directions. Maybe there's still time?" Despite that hint of unfinished business, Kevin has nothing but positive memories about his time in The Firm. "We were working everything out as we went along, and we weren't very practical or reasonable in our ambitions. We were inspired by classic text adventure games and tabletop RPGs, and had a couple of over-ambitious projects which didn't see the light of day. The main reason for getting *The Fear* done quickly was simply our enthusiasm and desire to release another game. Looking back there are so many memories and for us in the Eighties, work and life seemed to intermingle." ✱

MAD For It

FOUR OF THE BEST GAMES RELEASED ON THE MAD LABEL

SPELLBOUND

THE LIBRARY
STRENGTH

David Jones' follow-up to *Finders Keepers* is one of the best 8-bit arcade adventures at any price, mixing puzzle and RPG elements with plenty of humour. It's available on multiple machines but the standout is the Commodore 64 version thanks to Rob Hubbard's music.

THE MASTER OF MAGIC

INVENTORY ATTACK EXAMINE

Another budget game that could have easily sold at full price, Richard Darling's underground adventure proves that crude graphics can still convey unbelievable amounts of atmosphere. Figure in the highly accessible gameplay and you have a Mastertronic classic.

180

3RD DART AIMING AT TREBLE 20

Binary Design produced several significant titles for the MAD label, including this wonderful darts game. It goes heavy on the humour and stereotypes, but at its core is an excellent darts simulation featuring the 'floating hand' mechanic and of course the "180" shout.

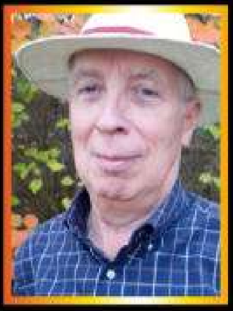
MOTOS

An official coin-op conversion appearing on a budget label? Okay so it was based on an obscure Namco effort from 1985, but the instant arcade gameplay was perfect for players seeking cheap thrills. Another winner from Mastertronic and the boys at Binary Design.

A TRIBUTE TO

FROM ITS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS OF SPACE INVADERS CLONES ON THE ZX81, HEWSON CONSULTANTS (LATTERLY HEWSON) BECAME ONE OF THE MOST LOVED AND RESPECTED SOFTWARE HOUSES OF THE EIGHTIES. JOIN RETRO GAMER AS WE CELEBRATE SOME OF ITS FANTASTIC GAMES ALONGSIDE FOUNDER ANDREW HEWSON

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON



» Andrew Hewson was a bedroom coder before forming Hewson Consultants in 1982. The company would go on to find great success throughout the Eighties.

Like many 8-bit software houses in the UK, the Hewson journey began with one of Sinclair's idiosyncratic computers. Stirred by the arrival of the ZX80, Andrew Hewson began studying the micro, determined to overcome his writing issues and create a book of tips and hints for the Sinclair computer. Wholeheartedly believing that computers were the future, Andrew followed up *Hints & Tips For The ZX80* with an equivalent for the ZX81, selling both via mail order as his newly formed company, Hewson Consultants.

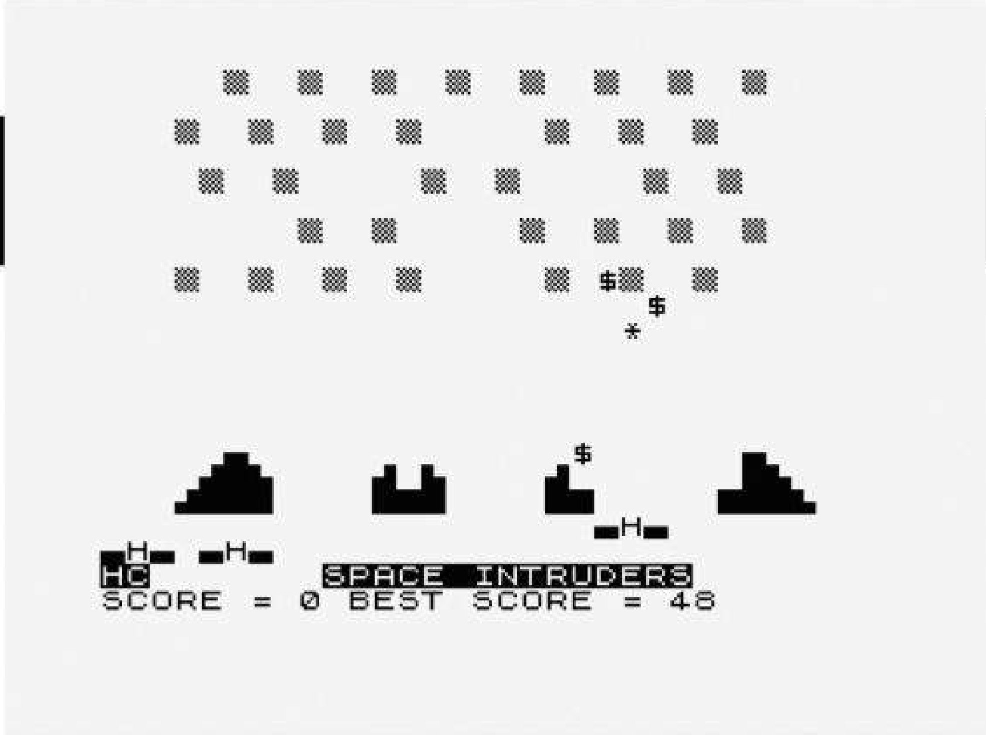
Like many a bedroom coder, Andrew's fledgling business initially operated out of his spare bedroom as he continued his full-time job. The 1981 ZX Microfair cemented his belief in the popularity of computers. Soon after, the publisher EMAP approached him to write a column in its new computing magazine, *Sinclair User*. The result, Hewson's Helpline, catapulted Andrew into homes throughout the country, and by the time the ZX Spectrum became a breakout success for Sinclair, Hewson was receiving masses of cassettes from hopeful game developers. The most significant of these was Mike Male, an air-traffic controller by day and coder of relatively complex flight sims such as *Pilot* (on the ZX81) and *Nightflite* (ZX Spectrum) in his spare time. The success of the latter led to Andrew investing further in cassette duplication.

By 1983, Hewson had expanded enough for Andrew to leave his job, take on some full-time staff and move from its small office in Wallingford to a 2,000-square-foot warehouse just outside Didcot. The ZX Spectrum had given the computer-games market a huge impetus – especially in the UK – and one particular cassette submission fortified Hewson's burgeoning reputation as a Spectrum specialist. The game was *3D Space-Wars*, and its author, Steve Turner, would go on to become an intrinsic part of Hewson's success.

As Hewson built its catalogue, Steve's business partner, Andrew Braybrook, discovered a love of the Spectrum's rival, the Commodore 64. As Steve created technically impressive games such as *Avalon* and *Dragontorc*, the balance of power shifted with Andrew Braybrook's triple assault of *Gribbly's Day Out*, *Paradroid* and *Uridium*. All three games were well-received, and in the latter's case, a solid gold sales hit. As a result, Hewson had an enviable catalogue for the two biggest home computers in the UK.

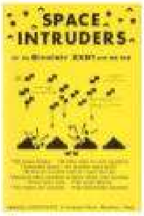
The software house had also acquired a reputation for high-quality and innovative games and was able to tempt ace programmers such as Raffaele Cecco to work on its behalf. The hits were non-stop. Shoot-'em-ups *Zynaps*, *Cybernoid*, *Netherworld* and *Marauder*; run-and-gunners *Exolon* and *Stormlord*; and pioneering games such as *Nebulus* and *Eliminator*. All these were critically acclaimed and released during Hewson's golden period between 1987 to 1989.

Sadly, like many 8-bit publishers, Hewson struggled with the increasing costs of the subsequent 16-bit era. Yet for ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 fans in particular, its name will be fondly remembered forever for its remarkably consistent run of genuinely pioneering games throughout the Eighties.



SPACE INTRUDERS

ZX81 • 1981



■ With dollar signs for alien missiles and asterisks for the player's cannon fire, Hewson's *Space Invaders* clone certainly stamped its ZX81 aesthetic to Taito's successful single-screen shoot-'em-up. Nonetheless, despite the lack of bespoke graphics, *Space Intruders* is a decent effort, with the phalanxes of aliens (or blocks) hovering menacingly as the player seeks protection behind the pyramid-esque buildings. While it may lack the flying saucer, and the invaders never descend, eroding much of the original's panic and excitement, it still plays remarkably well, especially considering the primitive capabilities of the ZX81.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

Not quite our first game, but the first of any real consequence. To begin with, we thought that copying everyone else was the way to go.

NIGHTFLITE

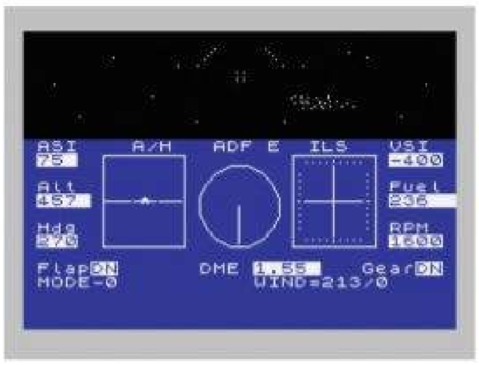
ZX SPECTRUM • 1982

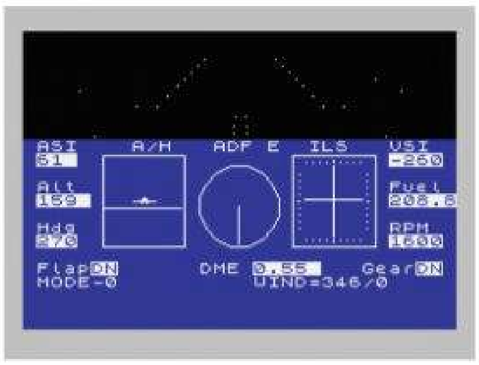
NIGHTFLITE
HEWSON CONSULTANTS

■ Having tested the ZX81 with the notable *Pilot*, Mike Male's *Nightflite* debuted on the 16K Spectrum and quickly became Hewson's first major hit. Set purely in the night sky (thus avoiding having to process that awkward horizon), the depth and complexity of *Nightflite* set an incredible standard of what could be achieved on the computer when it came to flight simulations. The re-released version came with one of Hewson's first professionally produced cassette inlays.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

Mike Male was a real air-traffic controller at Heathrow Airport. He avoided the issue of having a 3D view of the ground by setting the game in the night sky. I loved it when programmers came up with little dodges like that.





3D SPACE-WARS

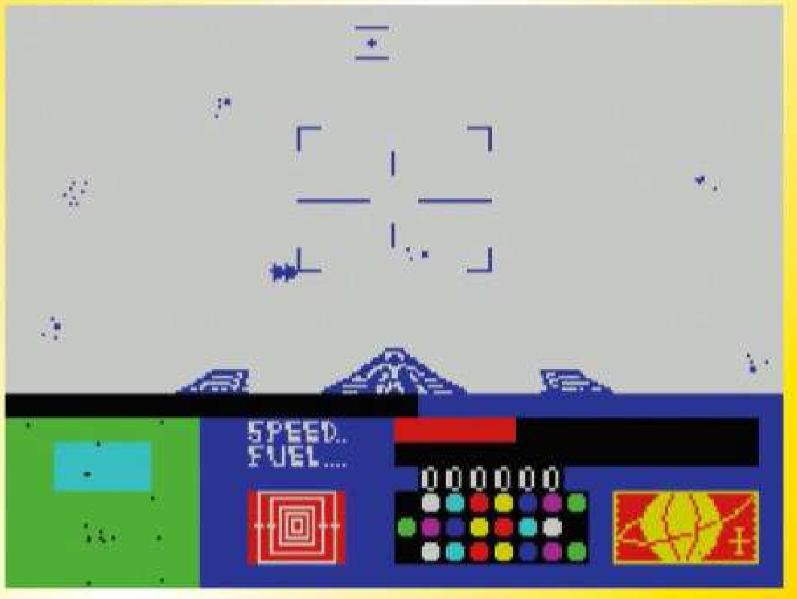
ZX SPECTRUM • 1983

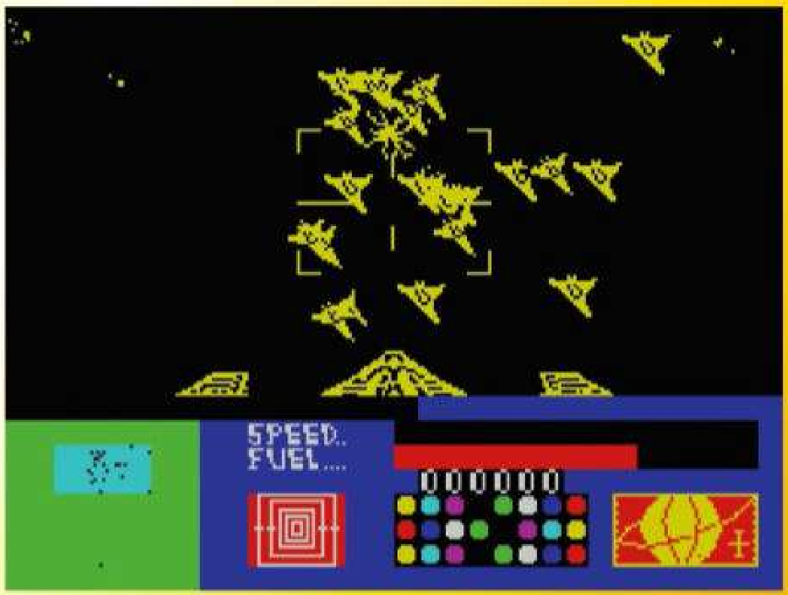
3D SPACE WARS
HEWSON CONSULTANTS

■ The appetite for space-based shoot-'em-ups, whetted by movies such as *Star Wars* and arcade games like *Space Invaders*, was in its prime by 1983. So when a young programmer from Essex named Steve Turner sent Hewson his first game, a space shoot-'em-up, Andrew could immediately see the commercial potential. Throughout the 3D part of the *Seiddab* ('baddies' backwards) series, Steve constantly improved the lightning-fast gameplay, creating an exciting and action-packed franchise for the ZX Spectrum. The games also proved consistent sellers and helped establish Hewson's reputation and commercial standing. ▶

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

Very different to everything else available at the time. *3D Seiddab Attack* – sorry about the name, everyone – was the sequel, and with the third game, *3D Lunattack*, Steve was working very hard to get as much as possible out of the ZX Spectrum.





THE SEIDDAB SAGA

HOW WE BATTLED THE SEIDDAB MENACE

3D SPACE-WARS

■ The murderous Seiddab arrive and systematically devastate our star system. Jump into the last fighter-killer class spacecraft and take the fight to them. Don't forget to refuel!

3D SEIDDAB ATTACK

■ Unfortunately, we only partly repulsed the initial invasion, and now Seiddab saucers menace the planet's surface. Patrol the streets in your tank and destroy them all.

3D LUNATTACK

■ Having successfully destroyed the Seiddab on Earth, it's time to attack their base on the Moon. Let's hope the Z5 Luna Hover Fighter is up to the task.

DI-LITHIUM LIFT

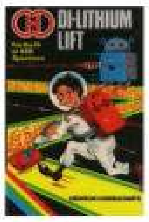
■ The Seiddab have stolen our energy supply – the eponymous crystals. Locate their vault and get them back before the Earth goes dark. This is the only game in the saga Steve didn't code.

ASTROCLONE

■ Twenty years have passed since the Seiddab Wars. With the stargates open, only superclones, thrust through the gates, can repel the Seiddab menace once and for all.

DI-LITHIUM LIFT

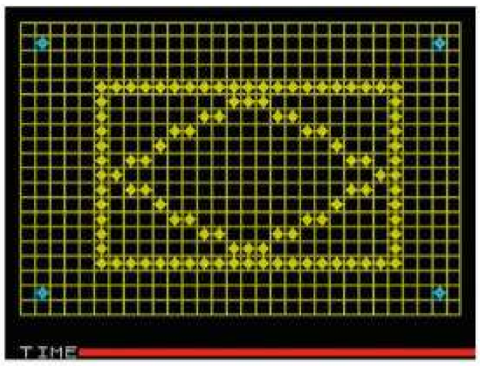
ZX SPECTRUM • 1983

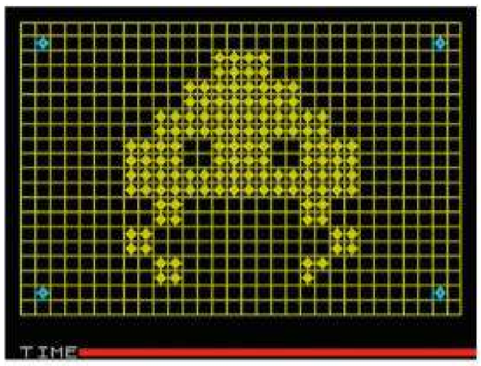


■ Released the same year as Steve Turner's groundbreaking *3D Space-Wars*, Hewson repurposed this fast-paced arcade game into another episode of the Seiddab story. The perennial invading baddies have stolen Earth's valuable Dilithium Crystals and secured them in a heavily guarded vault. *Di-Lithium Lift* is a grid-based game in the vein of Ocean's *Transversion* and Jeff Minter's *Gridrunner*. The player guides their stick-like avatar throughout each maze, dodging incessant enemy fire while collecting the Dilithium Crystals. It's an uncomplicated game but one of Hewson's better early efforts, especially its bouncy sound effects. *Di-lithium Lift*'s coder, Simon Cobb, went on to work for Ocean Software.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

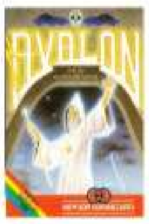
One of our first titles, and we signed it because it had me absolutely hooked. The premise was simple, but it was a classic arcade experience with some cracking sci-fi sound effects. Like myself, the coder ultimately left the industry.





AVALON

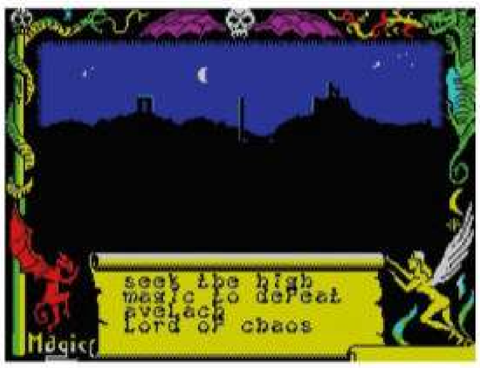
ZX SPECTRUM • 1984

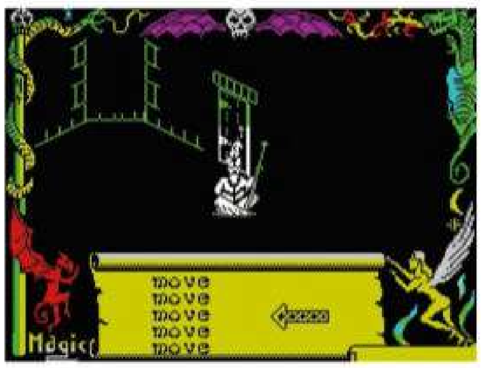


■ While the core *Seiddab* trilogy was undoubtedly a success, this game and its sequel, *Dragontorc*, propelled both Hewson and author Steve Turner further into the big time. Inspired by Arthurian legend, the player controls Maroc – or, more accurately, Maroc's astral form – a wizard determined to halt the evil of The Lord Of Chaos. *Avalon* was a surefire hit thanks to its multiple spells, locations and attractive display. However, it's the groundbreaking gameplay – for example, enemies follow Maroc throughout each room, existing beyond the current screen – that makes it such a significant Spectrum game today.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

A brilliant game for which we held a press launch in London on the South Bank with Bryan Ferry's *Avalon* playing in the background. I played it to completion sitting at home one long winter evening.


seek the high
magic to defeat
Lord of chaos
Magic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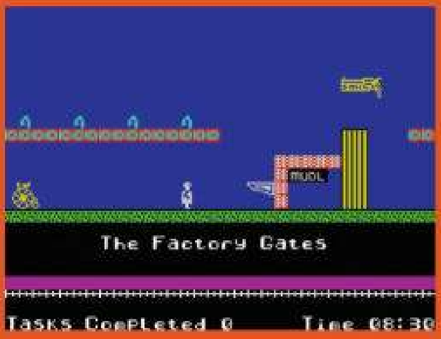
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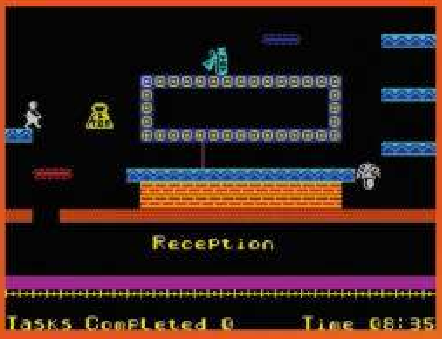
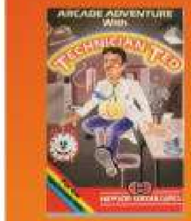
Tasks Completed 0
Time 08:30


Reception
Tasks Completed 0
Time 08:35

TECHNICIAN TED

ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC • 1985



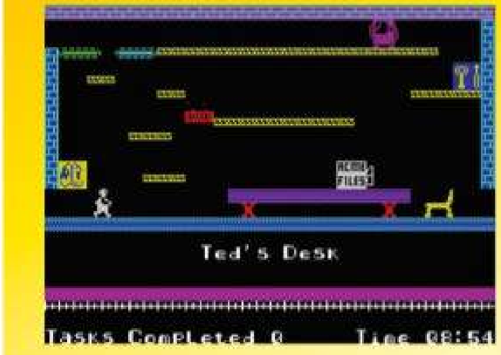
■ The development team of Steve Marsden and David Cooke first came to prominence with this fine platform game in 1985. *Technician Ted* follows the rotund titular character during a typical workday at his microprocessor factory. There are 21 tasks for Ted to perform, and, in the spirit of the game's inspiration, *Jet Set Willy*, plenty of wacky characters and hostile objects ready to sap Ted's lives away. While horrendously tricky in places, requiring pixel-perfect movement and judicious timing, *Technician Ted* was met with critical and commercial acclaim, making it another solid Spectrum game for Hewson. A 128K version, *The Megamix*, followed a year later.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

A very demanding game to play but successful enough for us to take it to the Spectrum 128K. I was always interested in the underlying technology, which made *Technician Ted* additionally attractive to me because it had its own bespoke loading screen.

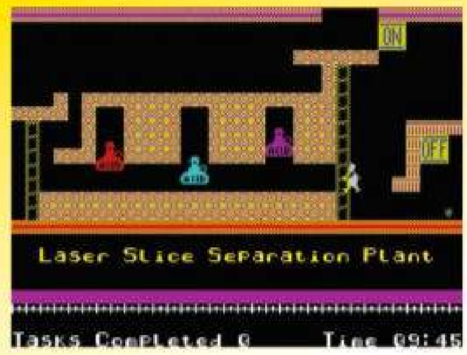
TED'S TASKS

IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR THIS BUSY TECHNICIAN


ACID FILES
Ted's Desk
Tasks Completed 0
Time 08:54

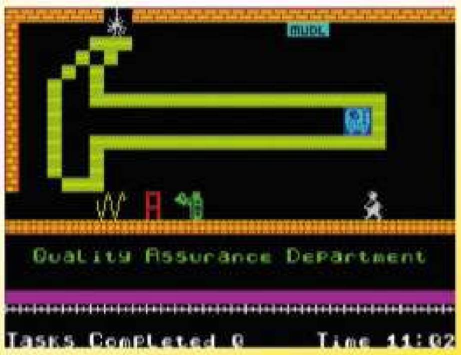
TED'S DESK (COMPLETE BY) 08:56

■ The first task of Ted's day is to make his way over to his desk and pick up his tools, but beware, he's not even safe here. Ted's Desk is a simple level that eases you into the game.


ON
OFF
Laser Slice Separation Plant
Tasks Completed 0
Time 09:45

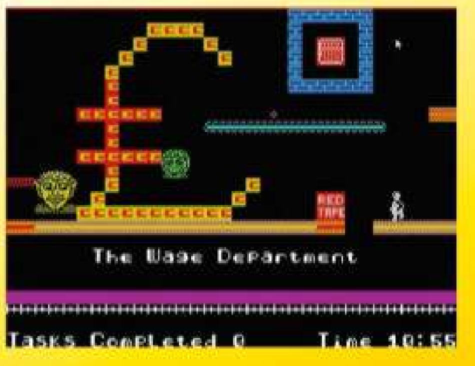
LASER SLICE SEPARATION (CB) 12:15

■ In one of Ted's most important duties, he has to oversee a chemical process involving these dangerously active bottles of acid. Who's in charge of this crazy factory?


MUDL
Quality Assurance Department
Tasks Completed 0
Time 11:02

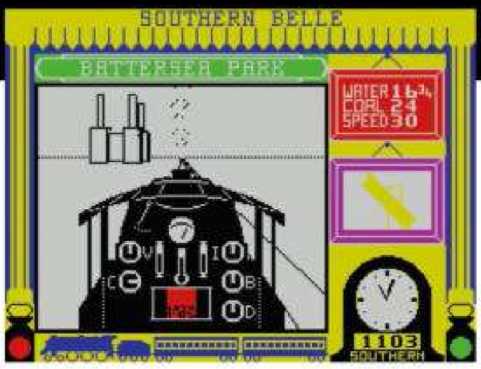
QUALITY ASSURANCE (CB) 14:25

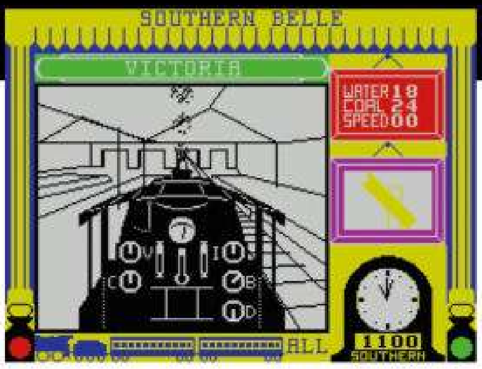
■ Some of the rooms in *Technician Ted* change as Ted completes tasks. Having overseen the production of several items, Ted has to study this computer in Quality Assurance.


RED TAPE
The Wage Department
Tasks Completed 0
Time 10:55

THE WAGE DEPARTMENT (CB) 16:07

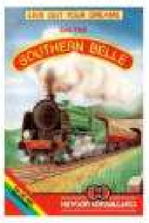
■ Finally, having completed all his numerous tasks, Ted can collect his wages and head home (and maybe stop in the pub). There's just one small piece of red tape left to finish first.





SOUTHERN BELLE

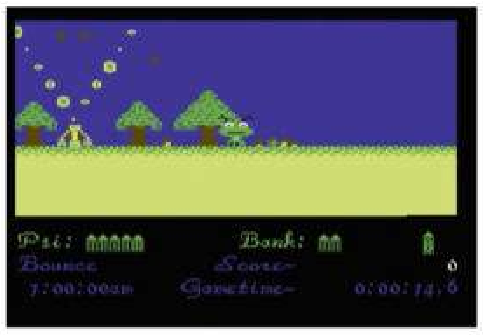
ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS • 1985

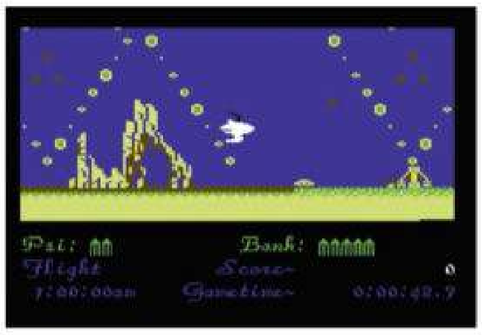


■ Air-traffic controller Mike Male broke away from flight simulations in 1985 to create this fabulous train game focussing on the golden age of steam, the early Thirties. The player assumes the dual roles of driver and fireman. The former controls the train's speed and pays close attention to track signals, while the latter ensures the water and coal levels of the train's engine are maintained correctly. Presented in a wireframe view, the countryside between London and Brighton scrolls past as the player attempts various scenarios. Take a leisurely journey down to the coast with the easy run or go full steam ahead and try to beat the 48 minutes and 41 seconds record set by a B4 class Pullman on the 26 July 1903. The quaint and unique *Southern Belle* was another hit for Hewson, and the two-person team of Mike and Bob Hillyer shifted to the Bath-Bournemouth line for its sequel, *Evening Star*.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

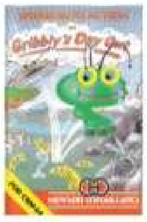
Good fun to play and a great press launch at the Steam Railway Centre in Didcot. Journalists competed against each other to ride on a steam engine footplate.





GRIBBLY'S DAY OUT

COMMODORE 64 • 1985



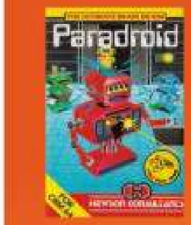
■ Andrew Braybrook made a stunning Commodore 64 debut in 1985 with the superbly original *Gribbly's Day Out*, a game which set the template for his phenomenal output on the computer. The game's star is a frog-like creature from the planet Blabgor, a strange and surreal world inhabited by creatures such as Gribbly and their offspring, the Gribblets. The Gribblets are an adventurous sort, prone to wandering off into the Blabgorian landscape in search of excitement. Sadly, Blabgor is far from safe, with many nasties preying on innocent little things such as Gribblets, not least the evil Seon, a mutated Blabgorian held within a powerful web. Throughout each hazardous region, Gribbly collects Gribblets in his cave as the game's fascinating evolutionary process occurs. An imaginative game that combines elements of classics such as *Defender* with a new style of gameplay, *Gribbly's Day Out* is a brilliant fusion of technical and game design prowess.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

Our first Commodore 64 game and a brilliantly innovative game. I still have a soft spot for *Gribbly's*, and it was a fine introduction for Andrew Braybrook and Hewson to the C64.

PARADROID

COMMODORE 64 • 1985



■ Widely acknowledged as one of the finest games of all time on the Commodore 64, *Paradroid* is a genuine 8-bit classic and was another step in cementing both Andrew Braybrook's and Hewson's elite status. Its plot is typically diverse from Andrew: a series of radionic beams has hit a fleet of robot-controlled freighters, sending the metallic guardians berserk. Earth is left with one choice, to send a prototype droid known as the Influence Device. Beamed aboard the fleet, this droid can eliminate the rogue robots with its laser or assimilate with them via an interface called Transfer Mode. While essentially a shoot-'em-up at heart, *Paradroid*'s depth of strategy, outstanding presentation and information created a legend which *Zzap!64* magazine called "faultless in appearance and execution". With eight ships, each housing multiple decks, an innovative minigame and dozens of robots to combat, it also represents one of the best-value Commodore games. ▶

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

A typically highly original and hugely playable game from Graftgold. As a game design, it must go down as one of the most elegant and strategically beautiful games in history.

PARADROID PARTICULARS

FIVE FACTS ON THE HEWSON CLASSIC

DOCTOR WHO INFLUENCE

■ As a committed Whovian, the eerie wandering robots of the Tom Baker story *Robots Of Death* helped inspire Andrew to create *Paradroid*.

HIDDEN PLAYTESTERS

■ Two of Andrew's friends, Richard Harvey and Robert Orchard, assisted with playtesting *Paradroid*. Their names appear in the game's droid library.

DIARY OF A GAME

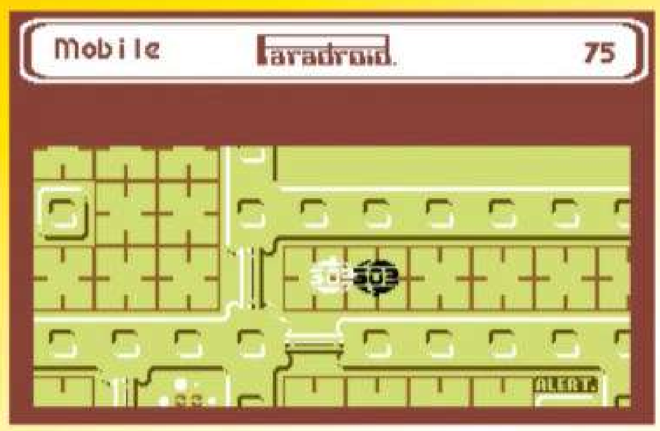
■ Andrew's regular diary in *Zzap!64* magazine proved an ideal platform to promote Graftgold games. It began with *Paradroid* in 1985.

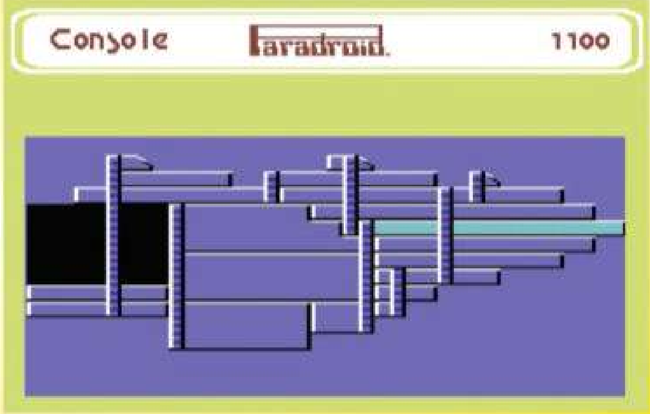
BEYOND A SHADOW

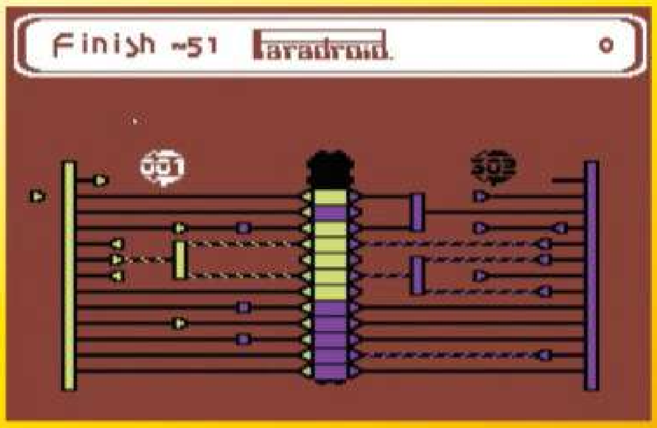
■ Another influence on Andrew during *Paradroid*'s early development was Beyond's icon-driven sci-fi adventure, *Shadowfire*, particularly its claustrophobic environments.

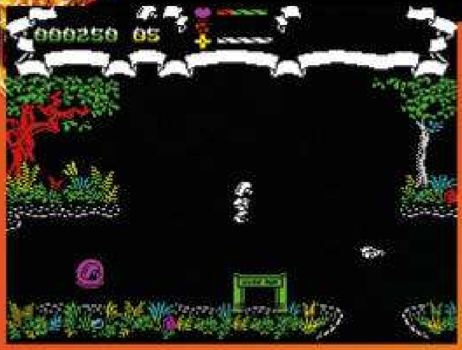
THE LOOK OF PARADROID

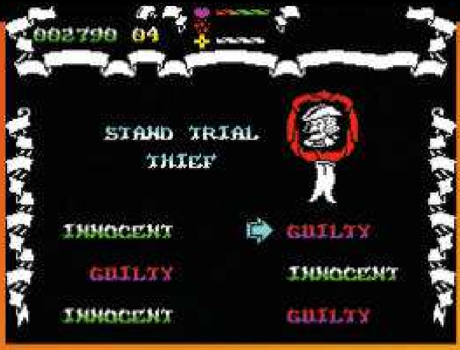
■ Andrew achieved *Paradroid*'s bas-relief effect simply by playing with shades of light on alternate sides of the game's walls.











FIRELORD

ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, COMMODORE 64 • 1986

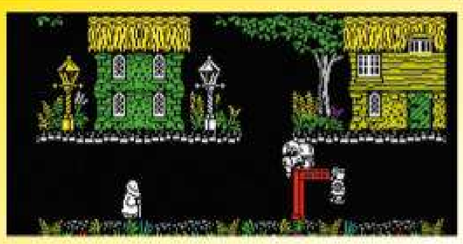
■ As 1986 dawned, Hewson's reputation meant that established programmers were beginning to offer their work to the software house. Fresh off the back of the brilliant *Starquake*, Stephen Crow was one such coder, proposing a similar style of game to Hewson, albeit transplanted to a medieval setting. The result was *Firelord*, an old-fashioned tale set within the fictional bucolic land of Torot. Sir Galaheart has returned to his homeland only to discover an evil queen has stolen a dragon's Firestone and cursed the land, turning its previously happy inhabitants into morbid apparitions. The brave knight gathers the ingredients to the spell of eternal youth, hoping its acquisition will persuade the vain queen to part with the stolen Firestone. *Firelord* is a vast and colourful game boasting 500 screens, a range of items and a frantic barter/stealing minigame.

KERB APPEAL

TOROT'S TOP ESTATE AGENT TAKES US AROUND THE BEST DESIRABLE PROPERTY THE LAND HAS TO OFFER

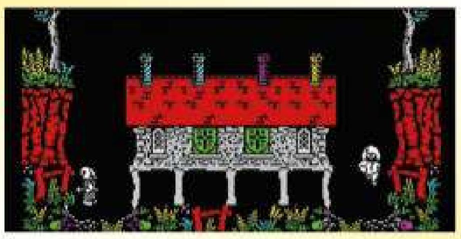
TOWN HOUSE

■ These two-storey townhouses are very much in demand in Torot at the moment. All come with highly flammable thatch as standard.



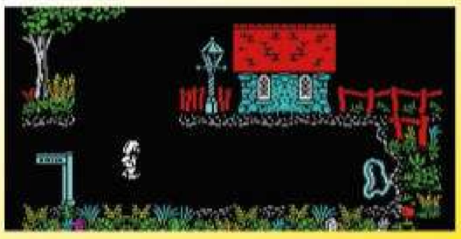
STABLES

■ Got a love of horses? This delightful abode-over-stables is perfect for you, with plenty of room for your four-legged friends while you sleep above.



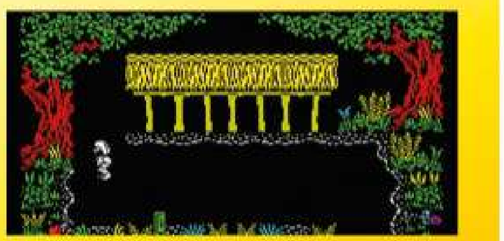
FLINT COTTAGE

■ We can now offer compact dwellings such as this quaint stone cottage for those on a slightly lower budget. Demonic possession is not guaranteed.



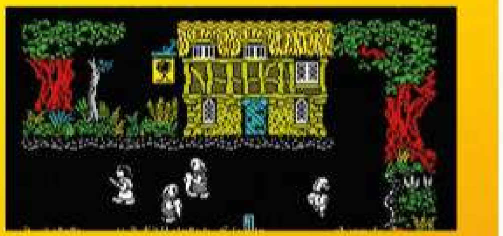
WOODEN BARN

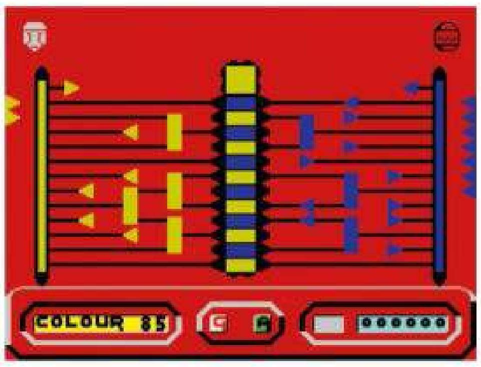
■ Here we have a unique investment opportunity. This ramshackle barn can become your dream country home with just a few minor additions, such as walls.

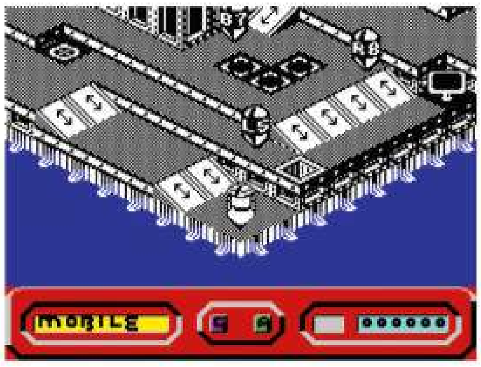


THE WHEATSHEAF INN

■ Have you ever dreamed of owning your own tavern? Now's your chance because Torot's world-famous The Wheatsheaf pub is up for sale. Ale not included.

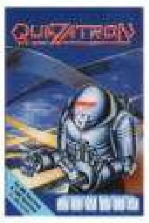




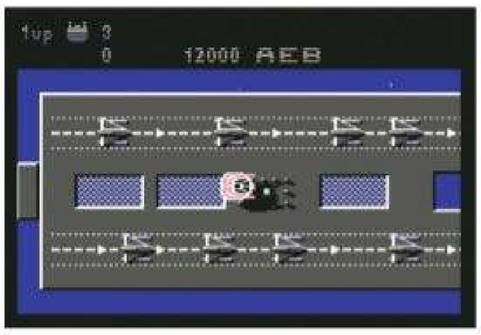


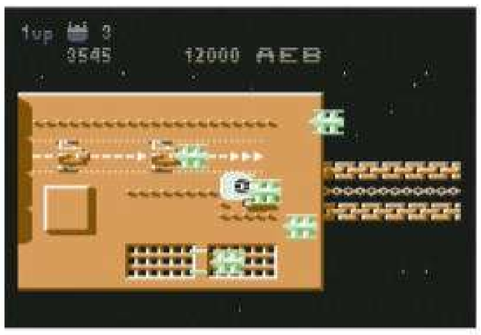
QUAZATRON

ZX SPECTRUM • 1986



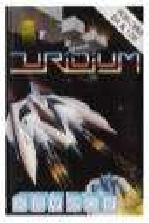
■ It's a testament to *Paradroid*'s enduring and absorbing gameplay that Steve Turner took it as a template, forging his Spectrum-tinted impression of the Commodore 64 game. As in *Paradroid*, a collection of robots have gone rogue, and the player-controlled droid – amusingly named KLP-2 (Klepto) – must either destroy them with its laser, ram them or integrate using the same grappling minigame from the Commodore 64 classic. The idea for *Quazatron* came about when Steve Turner began experimenting with an isometric engine before merging it with *Paradroid*'s concept and gameplay. The result was a Spectrum interpretation of *Paradroid*, adapted to its strengths, yet containing all of the compulsive elements that made the original such a hit. The fresh perspective gives KLP-2 an extra advantage over its foes: now it can push enemy robots to their doom off the edge of the map, and the system proved so successful that Steve Turner used it again in *Quazatron*'s sequel, *Magnetron*, and in the fantasy game *Ranarama*.





URIDIUM

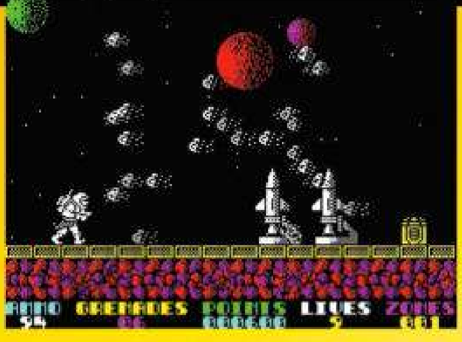
COMMODORE 64, VARIOUS • 1986

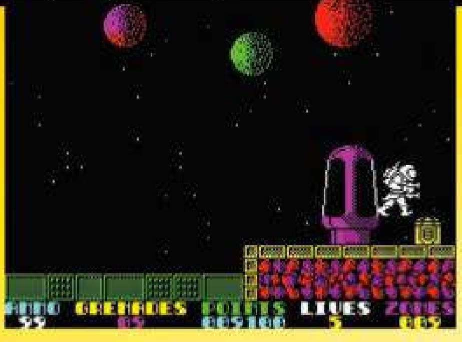


■ Space shoot-'em-up *Uridium* came to define both Andrew Braybrook and Hewson more than any other game. It's easy to see why, as *Uridium* is a supreme technical marvel, its speed and impressive parallax scrolling – then commonly assumed impossible on the Commodore computer – lifting both programmer and publisher into the stratosphere. Of course, it doesn't hurt that Uridium's gameplay is top-notch as well, with your Manta spacecraft shooting down waves and waves of vicious enemies, all set against the backdrops of gigantic warships called Dreadnoughts. The energy and finesse behind *Uridium*, powered by the sleek and deadly Manta spacecraft, ensured it became a critical hit and a commercial smash, remaining Hewson's biggest seller throughout its lifetime. Although it was ported to numerous systems many feel the C64 original is the best version. Interestingly, Mindscape's NES adaptation of *The Last Starfighter* movie is actually a reskinnned version of *Uridium*.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

What can I say that hasn't been said before? Silky-smooth graphics, better than anything we had seen before and utterly compelling. Its brilliance was obvious from the first time I saw it at Steve's home in Essex. We promoted it like crazy, and it became a huge success.





EXOLON

ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS • 1987

■ Raffaele Cecco had already proved himself to be an expert coder with games such as *Cop-Out* and *Equinox* for Mikrogen. His first effort for Hewson continued to demonstrate his innate capability of making a Spectrum game look utterly beautiful and almost on par with its arcade peers, coupled with some wonderfully balanced gameplay. In *Exolon*, the player is Vitorc, an armed soldier on a mission across a dangerous landscape. Gun emplacements, homing missiles, tanks, mines and more await Vitorc, who has a powerful blaster for organic life forms and a grenade launcher for the more robust enemies. In addition, each landscape houses a suit transformation booth. Guide Vitorc into one of these, and he transforms into the Exolon exoskeleton, a hydraulically powered suit that makes him tougher and better-armed. With its colourful explosions, compulsive gameplay and gorgeous display, *Exolon* was an exceptional start for Raffaele at Hewson.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

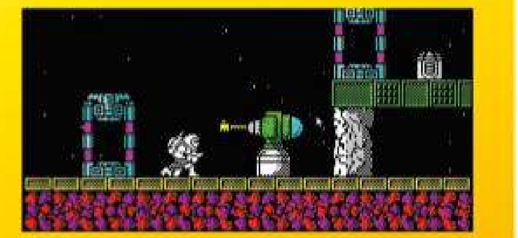
> Colourful, playful and explosive – a great game. I thought being able to see your character physically upgrade his exoskeleton was a particularly nice touch.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

FOUR OF THE DEADLIEST OBSTACLES IN EXOLON

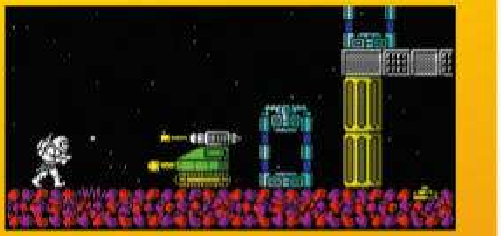
CANNON

■ Vitorc encounters one of these cannons on the first screen, and they pepper the rest of the game, spitting their deadly bullets at him. Duck or die.



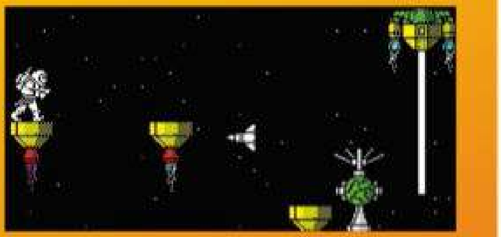
DOUBLE TANK

■ This two-tier steel tank has an indestructible lower half, and Vitorc can only pass after destroying the top segment. With both constantly firing, it's a formidable opponent.



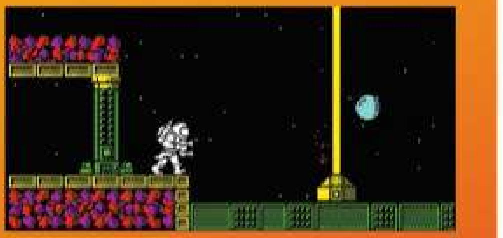
HOMING MISSILE

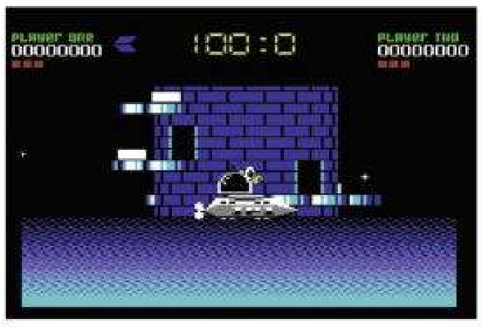
■ Vitorc can't shoot this sleek homing missile, and it quickly gathers pace across the screen. Only targeting its globe control tower will destroy it.

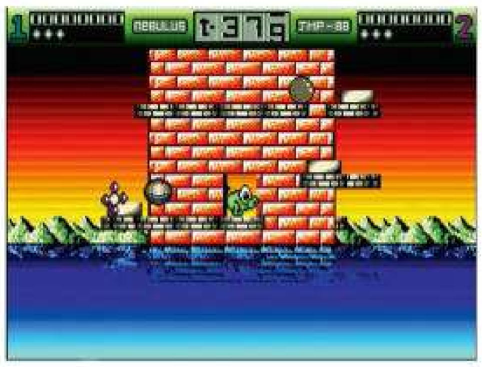


LASER BARRIER

■ While harmless in isolation, Vitorc has to shoot these barriers to proceed. Unfortunately, that's usually the cue for a bunch of aliens to attack.

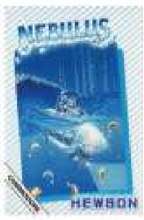






NEBULUS

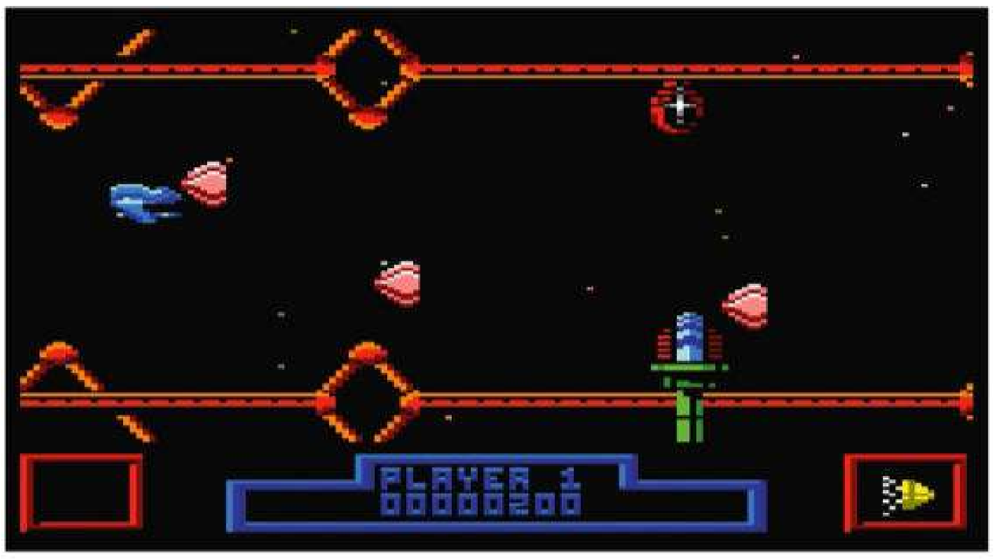
COMMODORE 64, VARIOUS • 1987



■ While much admired, John Phillips' tech demo didn't appear to have an obvious gaming application when he first presented it to Hewson. However, the coder had different ideas and returned to Hewson with *Nebulus*, an evocative sea-bound tale set within a series of rotating towers. *Nebulus*' clean and fast-moving graphics wowed gamers, and although its gameplay could be a touch too frustrating at times – those random and frequent projectiles in particular – *Nebulus* had all the ingredients to become another notable addition to the Hewson catalogue.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

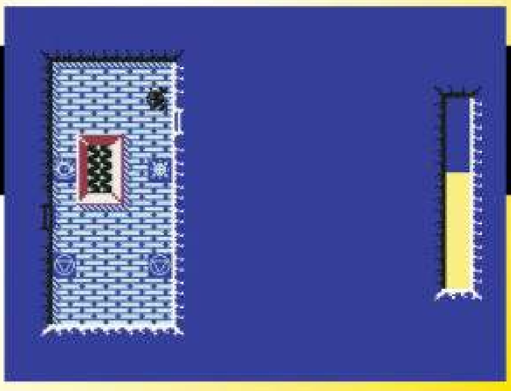
> John [Phillips] created a demo of a horizontally rotating cylinder with a sine wave scrolling over the top. It was a very clever piece of work, but I couldn't see a game in it. He then reworked it, turning the cylinder through 90 degrees with sprites instead of the sine wave, and it became obvious that the game should be 'climb the tower'.



ZYNAPS

SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS • 1987

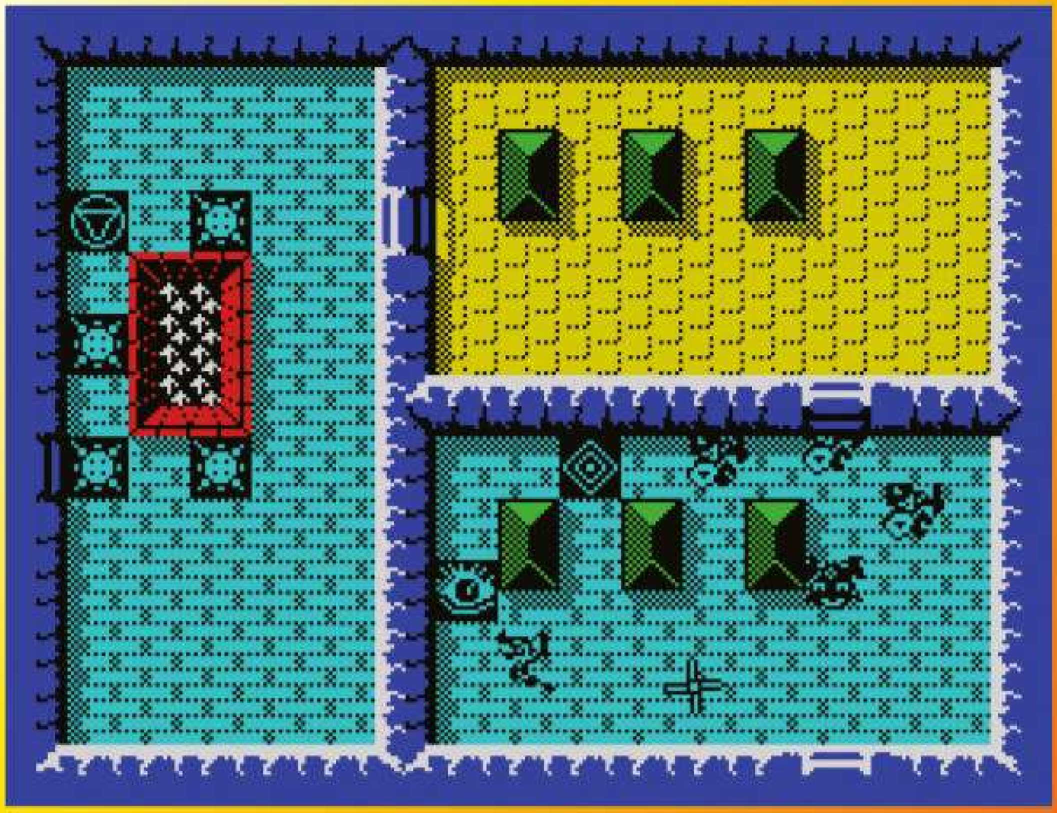
■ Following the success of *Gradius*/*Nemesis* and *R-Type*, programmers began emulating the gameplay of these arcade shoot-'em-ups, particularly their power-up systems. Having already proved his programming skills with an astonishing ZX Spectrum port of *Uridium*, Hewson commissioned Dominic Robinson to create a new game from scratch with the *Gradius* template in mind. The result was both an excellent game and a useful *Scrabble* score, *Zynaps*. Inside the Scorpion space fighter, the player escapes from an alien space station, battling enemies and deadly asteroid storms. Fortunately, defeated enemies often leave glowing power pods, and picking one up activates the Scorpion's upgrade system. Collect one pod, and the Scorpion increases speed and manoeuvrability; collect another, and its firepower increases; collecting a third unleashes a powerful bomb against ground targets while a fourth pod activates missile targeting. Finally, absorbing the fifth pod engages the Scorpion's Seeker Missile, a devastating weapon that homes in on its enemies. Together with its massive bosses, *Zynaps* remains one of the Spectrum's best games. ▶



RANARAMA

ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64 • 1987

■ Unfairly dismissed as a 'mere' *Gauntlet* clone, Steve Turner's mix of fantasy and *Paradroid*'s engrossing gameplay nevertheless proved popular upon release, notching a Crash Smash, among other accolades. Wizard's aide Mervyn, having accidentally transmogrified himself into a frog during an ill-advised attempt to attract the opposite sex, is stranded inside a dungeon. Being a frog has some advantages: the invading warlocks overlook Mervyn, leaving him free to escape. But first, he must eliminate the warlock that inhabits each level of this grimy underworld. All of *Ranarama*'s rooms are hidden until Mervyn enters, adding a frisson to the gameplay as the little frog hunts down warlocks, battling them in a neat minigame that involves shifting a row of runes to form the name of the game correctly. With its efficient spell system, which Mervyn must carefully balance, *Ranarama* is a game of considerable depth and certainly much more than the unsophisticated thrill of *Gauntlet*.



RESOLVING RANARAMA

FIVE SLIPPERY TIPS TO HELP MERVYN DEFEAT THE WARLOCKS

JUST LIKE IN GAUNTLET

■ OK, the similarity isn't totally off – *Ranarama*'s monsters spawn from generators. Destroy the generator, and they'll stop spawning. Just like in *Gauntlet*.

YOU GLYPH ME UP, PART ONE

■ Watch for the helpful floor Glyphs. Combine the Glyph Of Seeing with the See spell to reveal a map and the warlock's location.

MAGICAL WEAPONS

■ Comprising Munchers, Spinning Knives and more, these are virtually impervious and not worth the effort. Just destroy their generators, and move on.

YOU GLYPH ME UP, PART TWO

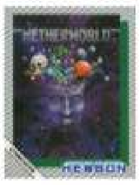
■ The Glyph Of Power releases a deadly bolt while the Glyph Of Travel permits Mervyn to move up and down the dungeon.

SPELL BALANCE

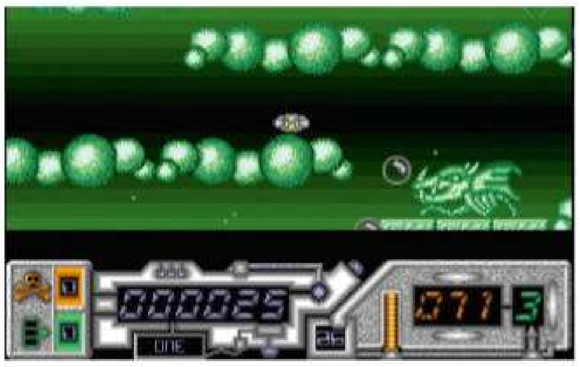
■ As Mervyn defeats warlocks, he'll receive better spells. Use the Glyph Of Sorcery to activate them but beware of the increased power usage required.

NETHERWORLD

COMMODORE 64, AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ZX SPECTRUM • 1988



■ Hewson's habit of attracting top programming talent continued into 1988 with this fantastic multi-directional shoot-'em-up from Finnish coder Jukka Tapanimäki. The player's craft is trapped in a tortuous world, plagued by acid-spitting demons and other assorted nasties. The only way to escape is to buy your way out by collecting the many crystals littered around each level. While essentially a shoot-'em-up at heart, Jukka's game injects enough variety to make *Netherworld* another Hewson winner, particularly on its original Commodore 64 platform. The *Boulderdash*-esque diamond collecting is an enjoyable objective, and the game's smooth scrolling and beautifully clean graphics help portray its slightly demented world. Yet while *Netherworld* is a solid and entertaining game, it doesn't quite match Hewson's usual innovative gameplay.



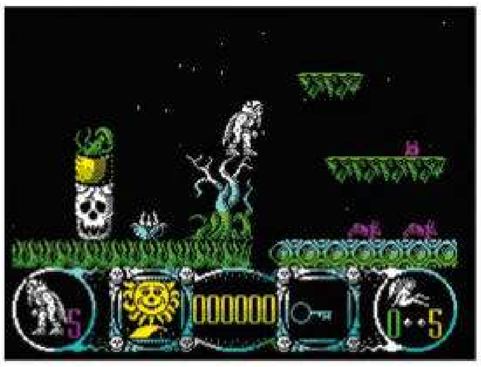
ANDREW'S MEMORIES

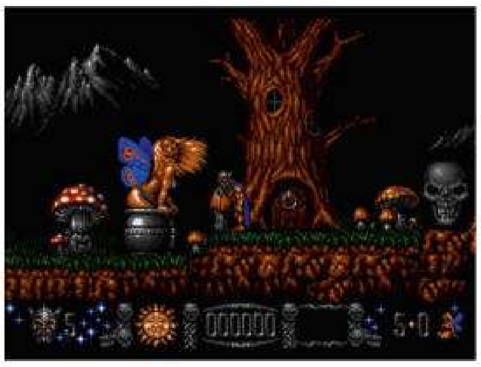
> Another high-quality offering. How did we continue to find such great talent? Basically, we worked hard to review everything that was offered to us. I travelled to Finland in mid-February to meet Jukka and sign the deal.

CYBERNOID

ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS • 1988

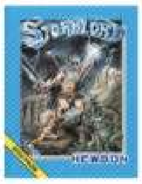
■ For his second Hewson game, programmer Raffaele Cecco once more redefined what was thought possible on the ZX Spectrum, leading one *Crash* magazine reviewer to declare it "an arcade game in your own home". While that might be slightly fanciful, there's no doubt that *Cybernoid* is one of the most interesting shoot-'em-ups of the Eighties and an experience precisely tailored to the Spectrum. In its workmanlike plot, pirates have raided some storage depots, and rather than chase the corsairs themselves, the Federation hires you and your Cybernoid fighting machine to hunt them down. The player encounters traps, pirates, missiles and more throughout *Cybernoid*'s many screens as they seek to reclaim the stolen goodies. The dramatic explosions and colourful graphics were remarkable back in 1988, and the game itself is meticulously balanced, with an assortment of power-ups such as a rear cannon and our particular favourite, a giant wrecking ball. A mammoth hit for Hewson, *Cybernoid*'s success led to *Cybernoid II: The Revenge* later the same year.





STORMLORD

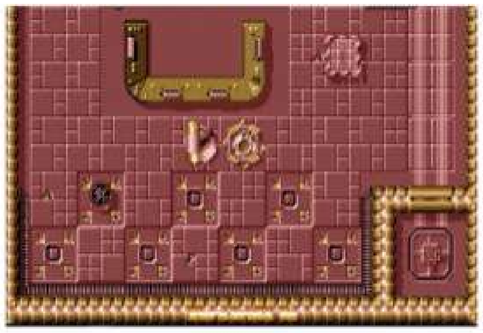
ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS • 1989

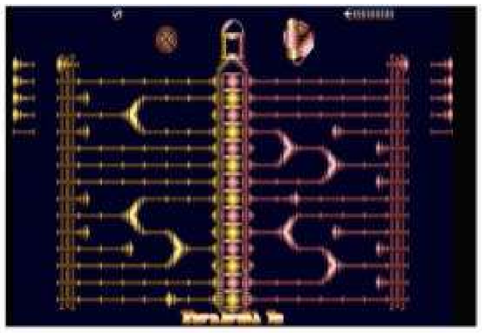


■ Raffaele Cecco was already considering a fantasy-based game before the runaway success of *Cybernoid* distracted him into creating its sequel. The coder was undeterred, however, and once *Cybernoid II: The Revenge* was done and dusted, it was back to his mystical romp, a classic fairy-tale story involving an evil queen (naturally), a brave hero (of course) and naked fairies in pots (wait, what?). Playing the eponymous hirsute fellow, Stormlord rescues the fairies held prisoner by the queen while fending off the deadly menagerie she has scattered across the world. Unfortunately, while as beautiful and professional as Raffaele Cecco's earlier games, the difficulty of *Stormlord* put many gamers off, and it doesn't quite have that elusive hook of *Exolon* or *Cybernoid*. Nonetheless, it's still a tremendously impressive game, and Hewson maximised its potential, even licensing a version to Sega's Mega Drive, at which point the fairies had to finally put some clothes on.

ANDREW'S MEMORIES

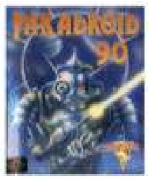
In the wake of *Cybernoid*'s runaway success, we had delayed it, deciding that a *Cybernoid* sequel would be a better move. Another colourful product from Raffaele Cecco, which we ported to the 16-bit platforms.



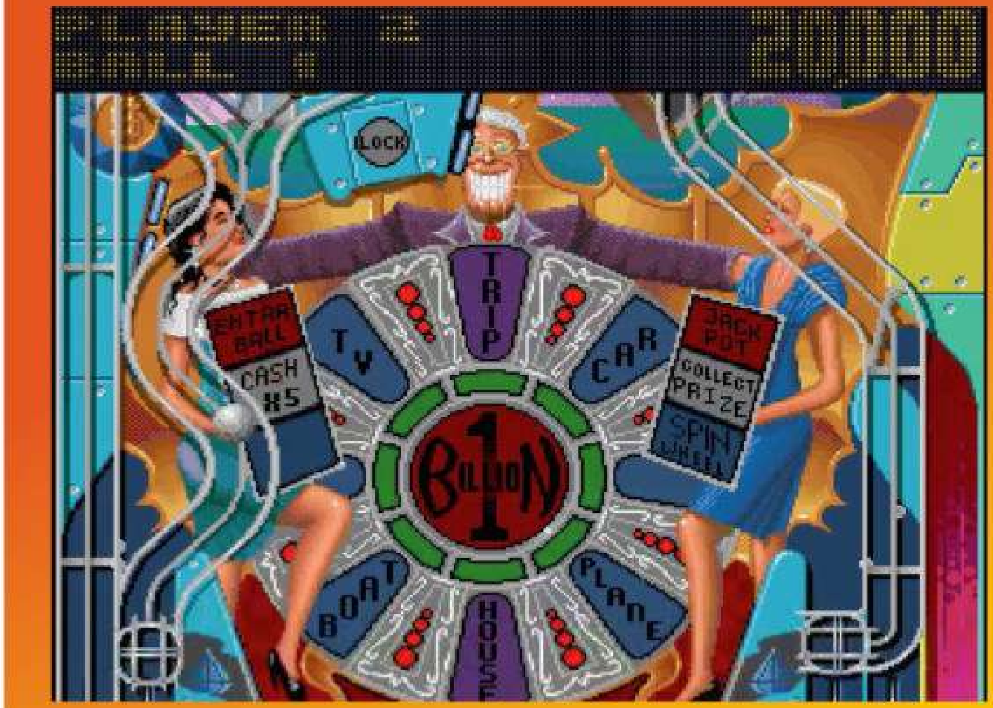


PARADROID 90

AMIGA, ATARI ST, ACORN ARCHIMEDES • 1990



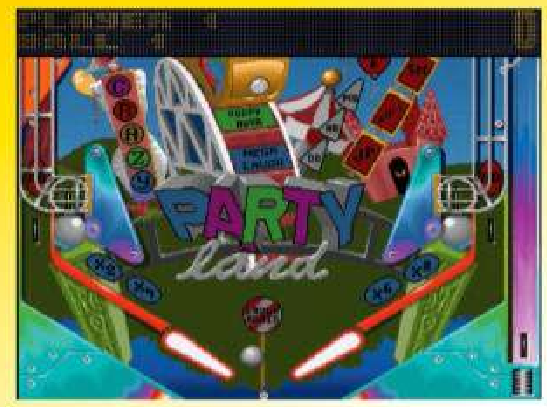
■ It felt inevitable that Andrew Braybrook would eventually return to the game that made his name, and once both he and Hewson felt comfortable with the 16-bit computers, that time duly arrived. The aesthetically clean and shiny bas-relief graphics return in *Paradroid 90*, as does the grappling minigame, albeit with a steampunk-style gloss. In a strange move, the game scrolls just vertically, but the core gameplay of *Paradroid* is present and correct. The new Influence Device can shoot or attempt to integrate with enemy robots as it proceeds throughout the many decks of each spaceship. Interfacing with an opponent adopts it and its powers while, as in the original, lifts take the player to other decks, and consoles reveal both essential and trivial information about each droid. Yet while the enduring gameplay is as good as ever, this 16-bit upgrade is a case of what could have been. Horrendously tricky in places, there's plenty of buzzing and beeping in this busy robotic world, and the music is suitably catchy. But if we're being honest, the original remains perfection, and that's pretty hard to improve.



PINBALL FANTASIES

AMIGA, VARIOUS • 1992

■ Like many 8-bit software houses, Hewson struggled towards the end of the Eighties, failing to generate enough revenue to fund the ever-increasing development teams required by most games. Its successor, 21st Century Entertainment, lasted until 2000, with most of its success based on the pinball games of Digital Illusions. While not much more than an upgraded version of its predecessor, *Pinball Fantasies* included enough extra whistles and bells to become the biggest seller of Andrew Hewson's career.



ANDREW'S MEMORIES

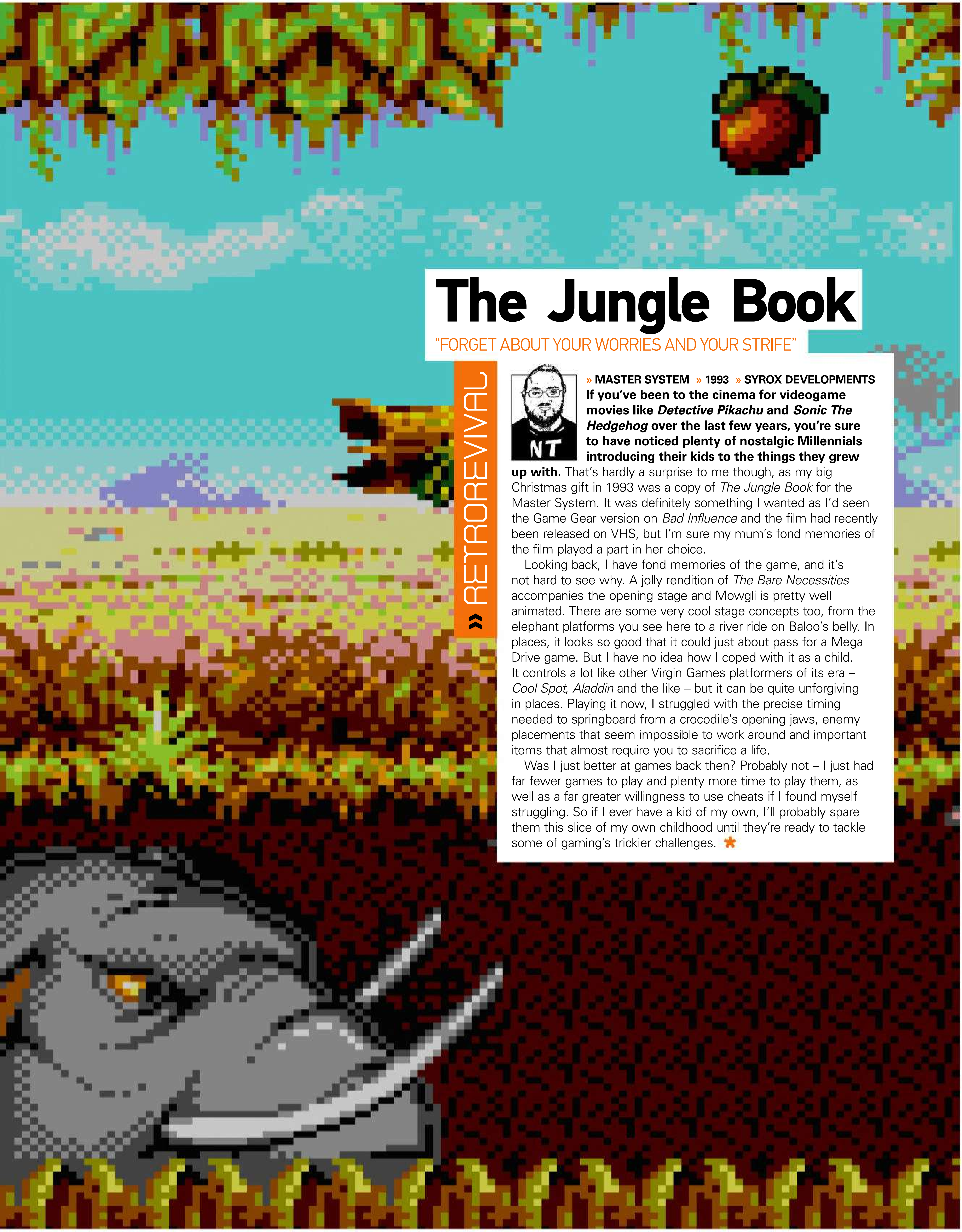
I loved our *Pinball* series, and they sold in huge numbers. This sequel was by some margin the most successful game of my career, selling even more than *Uridium*.

THE HEWSON STORY

FROM SPACE INTRUDERS TO DIGITAL PINBALL

HINTS & TIPS FOR
VIDEOGAME PIONEERS
ANDREW HEWSON

■ Despite Andrew's move into accountancy after the end of 21st Century Entertainment, the Hewson flag still flies today thanks to his son, Rob, CEO and creative director at developer Huey Games. Over the past six years, Huey has carved a unique niche, releasing limited-edition collectors USB cassettes alongside an impressive variety of indie games such as the frantic shoot-'em-up *Hyper Sentinel* and the evocative open-world trading RPG *Silk*. Featuring many of the personnel behind games such as *Lego Star Wars* and *Pinball Fantasies*, the Huey story goes from strength to strength, and if you want to know more about the Hewson story, Huey also sells Andrew Hewson's excellent book, *Hints & Tips For Videogame Pioneers*. Head on over to hueygames.com to find out more.



The Jungle Book

“FORGET ABOUT YOUR WORRIES AND YOUR STRIFE”

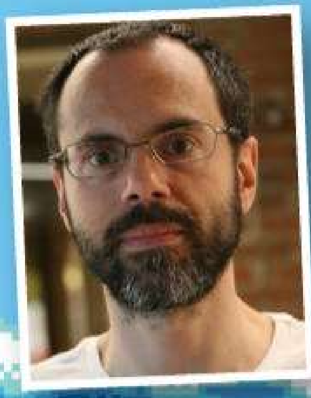
» MASTER SYSTEM » 1993 » SYROX DEVELOPMENTS

If you’ve been to the cinema for videogame movies like *Detective Pikachu* and *Sonic The Hedgehog* over the last few years, you’re sure to have noticed plenty of nostalgic Millennials introducing their kids to the things they grew up with. That’s hardly a surprise to me though, as my big Christmas gift in 1993 was a copy of *The Jungle Book* for the Master System. It was definitely something I wanted as I’d seen the Game Gear version on *Bad Influence* and the film had recently been released on VHS, but I’m sure my mum’s fond memories of the film played a part in her choice.

Looking back, I have fond memories of the game, and it’s not hard to see why. A jolly rendition of *The Bare Necessities* accompanies the opening stage and Mowgli is pretty well animated. There are some very cool stage concepts too, from the elephant platforms you see here to a river ride on Baloo’s belly. In places, it looks so good that it could just about pass for a Mega Drive game. But I have no idea how I coped with it as a child. It controls a lot like other Virgin Games platformers of its era – *Cool Spot*, *Aladdin* and the like – but it can be quite unforgiving in places. Playing it now, I struggled with the precise timing needed to springboard from a crocodile’s opening jaws, enemy placements that seem impossible to work around and important items that almost require you to sacrifice a life.

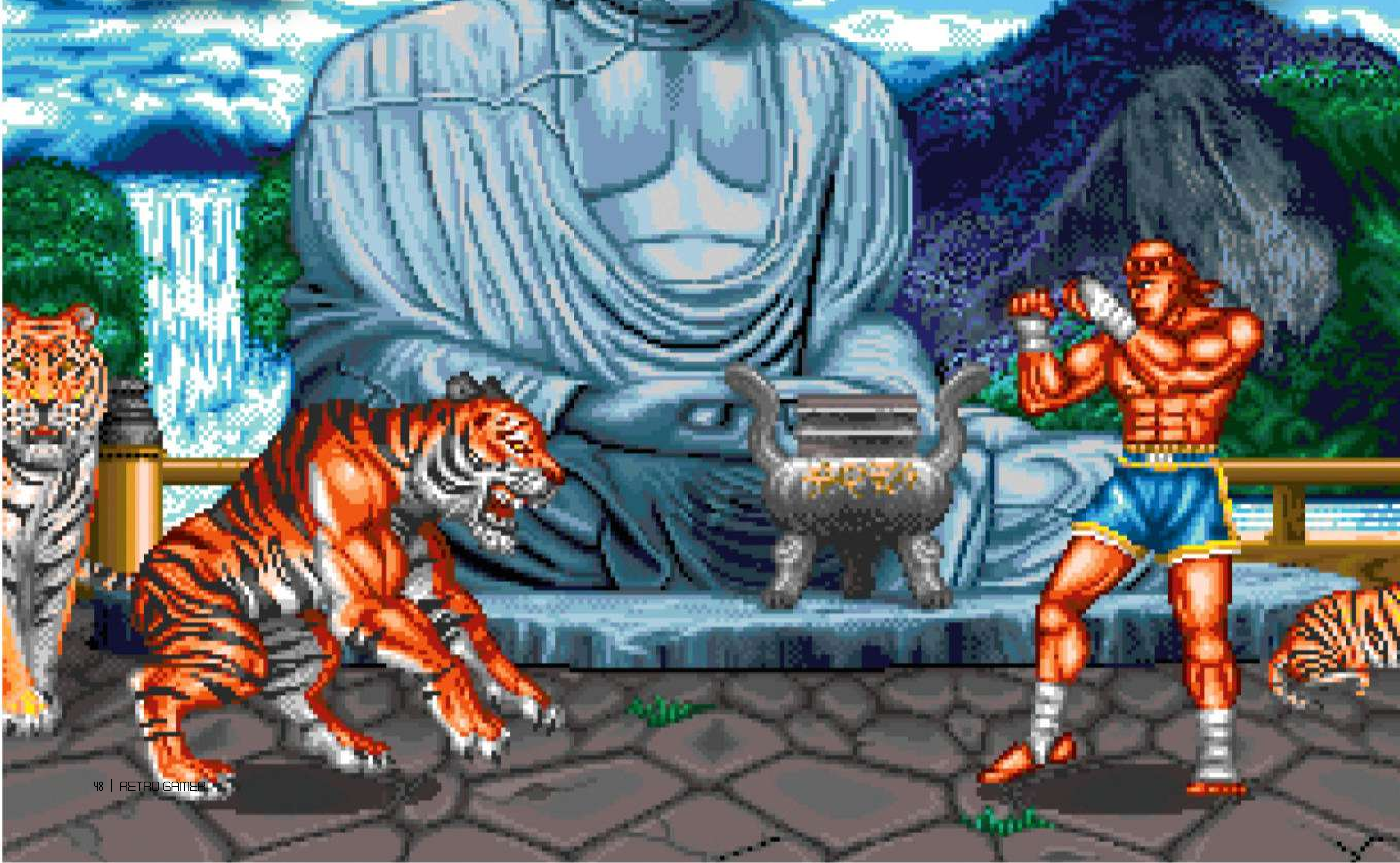
Was I just better at games back then? Probably not – I just had far fewer games to play and plenty more time to play them, as well as a far greater willingness to use cheats if I found myself struggling. So if I ever have a kid of my own, I’ll probably spare them this slice of my own childhood until they’re ready to tackle some of gaming’s trickier challenges. ✱

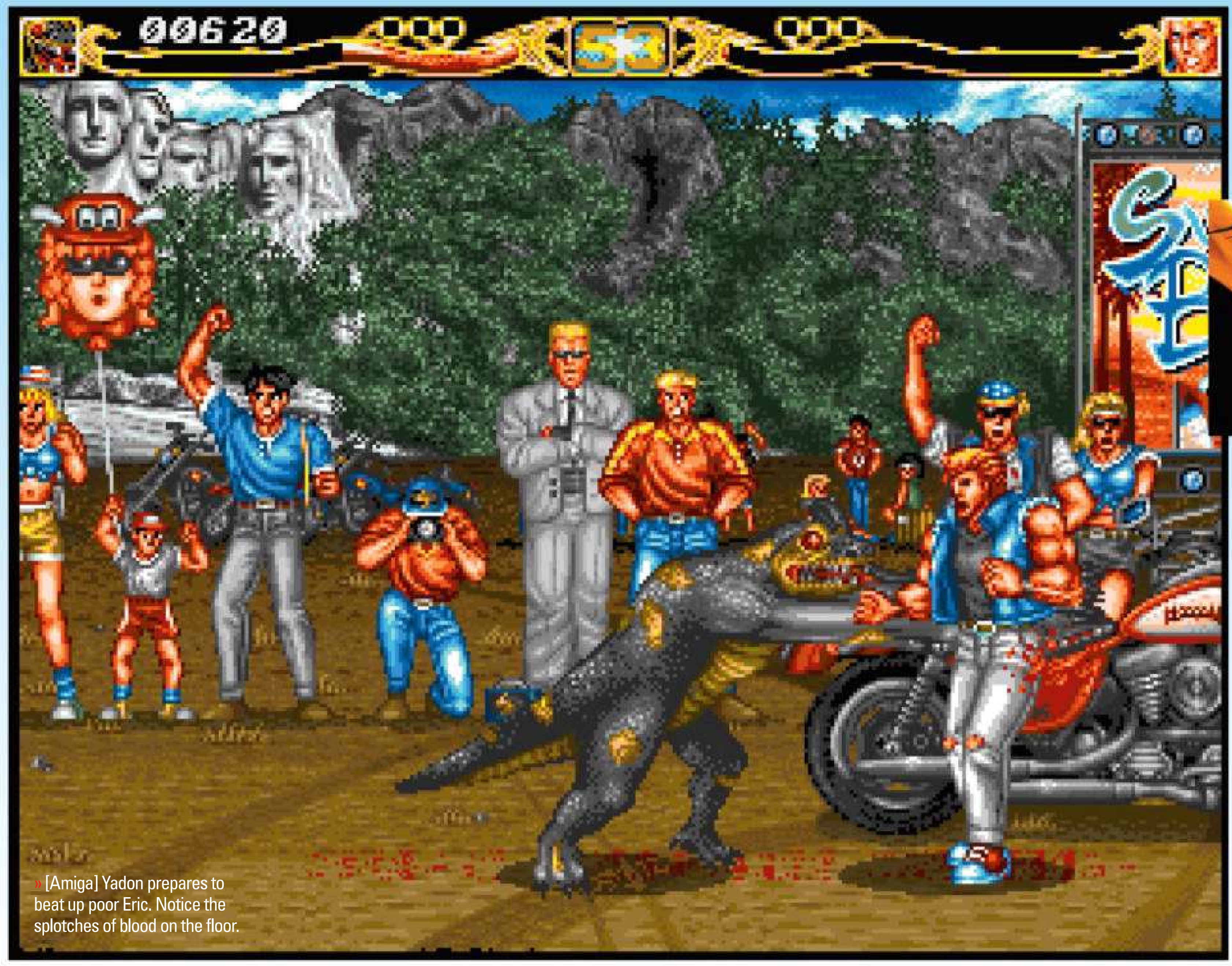
THE MAKING OF FIGHTIN' SPIRIT



» Francesco Iorio still works in the games industry. He was head of development at Revolution Software, developing *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* and currently works in IT in Canada.

» Massimiliano Calamai continued working in games long after Light Shock was dissolved, first on several adventure games with Italian studio Artematica. He later founded Smallthing Studios, which is currently working on a new entry in the *Simon The Sorcerer* series.





» [Amiga] Yadon prepares to beat up poor Eric. Notice the splotches of blood on the floor.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

FIGHTIN' SPIRIT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA CD3D
YEAR: 1996

BLACK VIPER
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1995

PRAY FOR DEATH
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1996

From the passionate region of Sicily, comes one strong contender for the best-looking fighting game on Amiga, which successfully applied the SNK lesson to the home computer. This is the story of Fightin' Spirit

WORDS BY DAMIANO GERLI

In the Nineties, SNK was one of the kings of the fighting genre. Before 3D games would arrive to kick-start the genre in a new dimension, SNK, along with Capcom, developed some of the best titles to be found in the arcades, such as *Fatal Fury* and *Samurai Shodown*. But, if one wanted that same quality at home, they'd have to pay hefty prices for both SNK's AES console and its huge cartridges. So, who could resist a cheaper alternative which boasted that same graphics fidelity and frenetic gameplay? This was the starting point for the developers of *Fightin Spirit'* or, *Perpetual Craze*, as it was then known.

The game was developed by Italian software house Light Shock Software, which was designed to be different from the average development studio. Founded by Francesco Iorio and Massimiliano Calamai, the two had been working on Commodore computers since they were kids and had several contacts within the industry. Francesco had worked with Team17 on a PC conversion of racing game *Overdrive*, which in the end was never released. Massimiliano had worked at the Italian studio Simulmondo as a graphic designer. Together with their friends Matteo Tesser and Marco Biondi, the newly formed team of four seemed to hit it off right away. Matteo remembers they would spend weekends at each other's house, alternatively staying in Florence and Belluno.

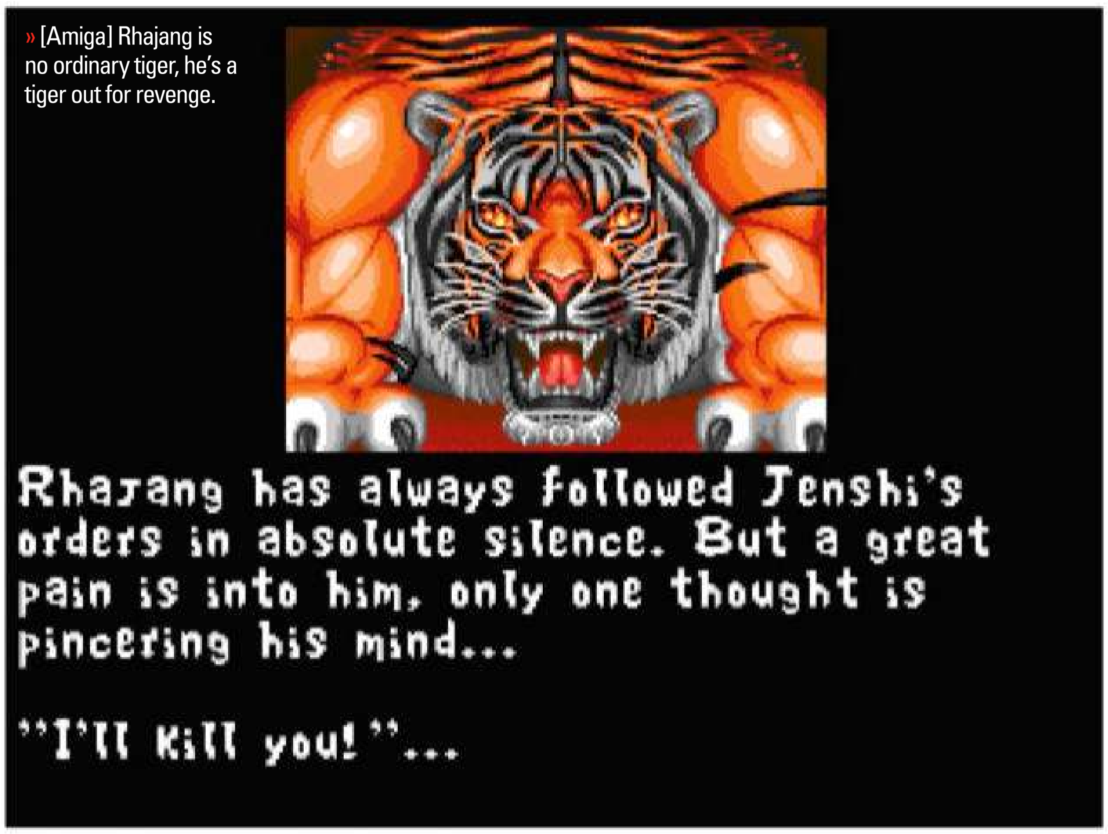
> **"The phone was ringing off the hook all day long"**
> Marco Biondi

After a few months, Massimiliano and Francesco decided to fly to London's ECTS to show a portfolio of projects to publishers: images and demos they had been working on. They returned to Italy with great hopes for their work, so much so that in October 1994 they decided to officially create Light Shock Software as a company. "Legally, only Massimiliano and Francesco were actual members of the company, since me and Matteo were not the official founders," Marco remembers. "But still, relationships between us were on the same level, there was no real hierarchical organisation."

The studio then approached *The Games Machine* magazine for an interview. The resulting published feature would put the fledgling studio on the map. "The phone was ringing off the hook all day long, we got sent all kinds of games and demos via mail", recalls Marco. While

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** NEO SOFTWARE PRODUKTIONS GBMH
» **DEVELOPER:** LIGHT SHOCK SOFTWARE
» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA, AMIGA CD32
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP



» [Amiga] Rhajang is no ordinary tiger, he's a tiger out for revenge.

Rhajang has always followed Jenshi's orders in absolute silence. But a great pain is into him, only one thought is pincering his mind...

"I'll kill you!"...

Francesco and Massimiliano already had plans to develop their own games, when they saw how many promising projects were out there, they saw an opportunity. They would help those young teams, not only by being their publisher but also by carrying their game to the finish line. Francesco had seen first-hand how difficult it was to finish a project, despite already having a publishing agreement with Team17. By helping other teams with their projects, Light Shock would be known for operating in a way that resembled a quality assurance team, rather than an average software house.

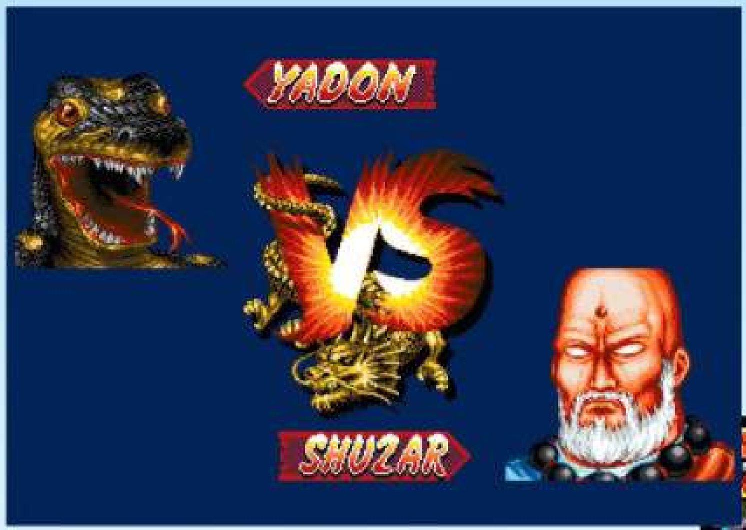
F*ightin' Spirit* was born almost by chance, Massimiliano mentions, while he was browsing some gaming magazines. He noticed an interview with Dynamic Style, a team from Paterno, Sicily. It had been working, at that stage for several years, on a fighting game in the style of SNK's *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting*, called *Perpetual Craze*. Light Shock phoned the developer up and, soon after, Dynamic Style was working with the two producers day and night, ironing out bugs and adding new graphical touches. "The team had done a really great job with the graphics, *Perpetual Craze* looked as close to an actual SNK beat-'em-up as it was possible on the Amiga," explains Massimiliano. *Perpetual Craze*'s slick-looking graphics were created by Giacinto Platania, he mentions drawing them by hand "pixel after pixel" in Deluxe Paint IV.

Giacinto also explains how the fighting game had been originally planned for a 1994 release, under its *Perpetual Craze* moniker. "It was missing a lot of the animations and graphic pizazz of the *Fightin Spirit'* version, but perhaps in 1994 it would have been much more successful." Dynamic Style could not find a publisher so, when the offer from Light Shock came, it felt it had no choice but to accept.

The work in bringing *Perpetual Craze* from beta version to release would end up taking more than a year. "There was little to no gameplay, so we had to build that up from the ground. In the end, the project pushed the Amiga ECS so much that we had to cut out some of the original songs that the team had written because, otherwise, the game would not have fit on the floppies," comments Massimiliano. Marco adds, "The team had put their hearts and souls into *Perpetual Craze*, they were barely 18 years old by that point, so they were indeed incredibly passionate about the project. Sure, perhaps they were being a little too bright-eyed about it, but that's understandable." While *Perpetual Craze* had been brought to Light Shock more than halfway completed, it still needed work and the Dynamic Style team members lived pretty far away. Most of the work was carried out via exchange of floppies and CDs via mail, which definitely made communications difficult.

> **"There was little to no gameplay, so we had to build that up from the ground**
> Massimiliano Calamai

It is fair to say that *Fightin Spirit'* is a title *heavily* inspired by classics of the genre, along with being infused with pop-culture references from the Eighties and Nineties. Giacinto mentions having a lot of fun in picking out as many as possible: from the Van-Damme movie *Kickboxer* to a character designed to look just like Freddie Mercury (Lorentz). He also says the character of Yadon was inspired by Thulsa Doom from *Conan The Barbarian*. The post-apocalyptic anime series *Fist Of The North Star*, which was a hit in Italy in the Eighties, was also heavily plundered, with three characters that sport the likenesses of those featured in the popular Japanese anime/manga.

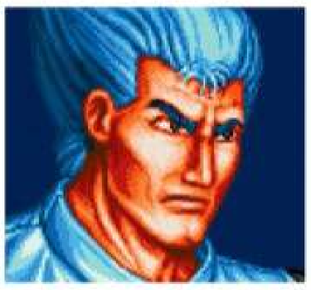


» [Amiga] It's beast verses old man. Our pocket money is on Yadon.

Davide Busetta was the musician in charge of the soundtrack, and he also did his share to embrace the Eighties hard-rock style, going full blast on the intro track *Into The Night*. All the sound effects and voices of the characters were actually created by Light Shock itself together with a few friends and girlfriends, recording them in a basement through a cheap microphone. Assistant coder Cesare Di Mauro mentions how he had also programmed dynamic illumination for the game's night scenes, but they were not incorporated as that would have meant Giacinto would have to modify the graphics again and, well, "He did not feel like it."

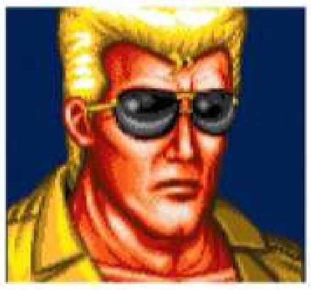
Ironically, it was the demo of *Perpetual Craze* that would actually score Light Shock its first publishing agreement. Massimiliano mentions that the team managed to get a positive

CUNNING COMBATANTS



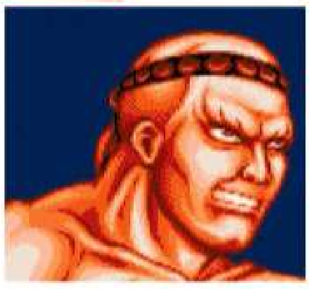
KENTO SAZAKI

■ Kento is a Japanese martial arts fighter, the last student of the school of Shaolin Hakiota. He is his master's pride and joy and participates in the tournament to show everyone why the Hakiota style is the most devastating of all.



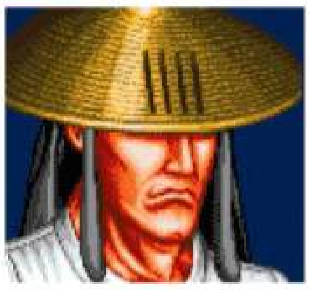
BURKE MORTLOCK

■ Burke is an American mercenary who enjoys beating up his adversaries for the thrill of it, rather than just taking their money. He apparently possesses the venomous spirit of the scorpion and loves playing videogames.



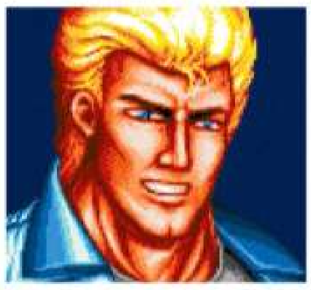
TONG LEE

■ Hailing from Thailand, Tong is a master in both Thai boxing and kickboxing. He seems to have quite a grudge against Japan and he is ready to defend his reputation as one of the best fighters in his style of martial arts.



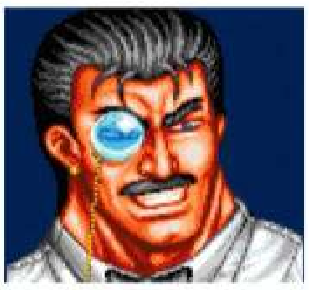
YURI HOSHIMOTO

■ Hailing from Japan, Yuri is very skillful with the wooden stick (Bo) and he is a champion of Yoseikan Budo. He considers his weapons to be a natural extension of his arms and legs. In his free time, he likes to collect paintings.



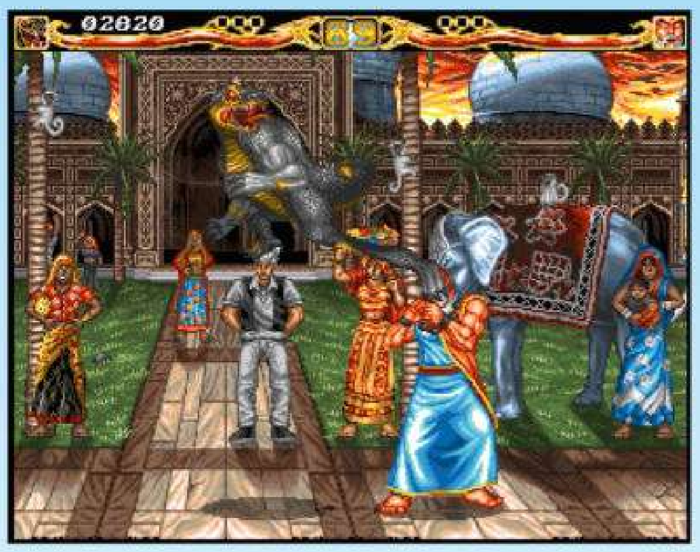
ERIC WINDSOR

■ Eric is a real easy rider, he likes to live carefree and just roam around the country. He is Sheila's former boyfriend and a good friend of Kento. His fighting style comes directly from the streets, as he doesn't need no school, baby!

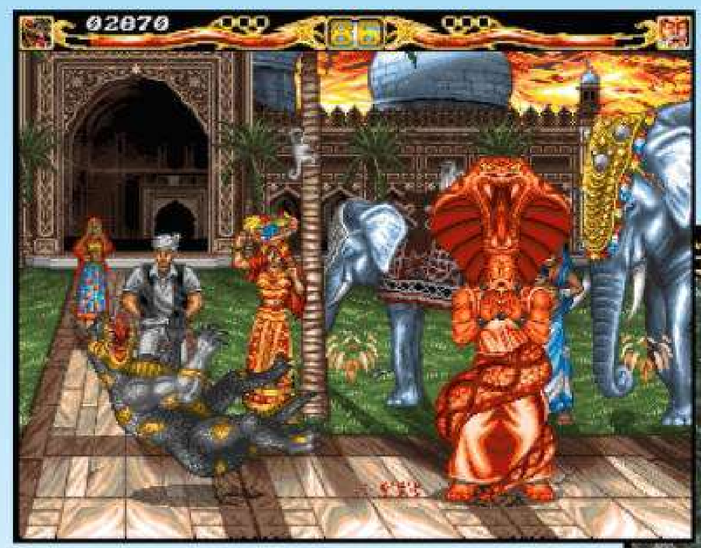


LORENTZ O' DONNELL

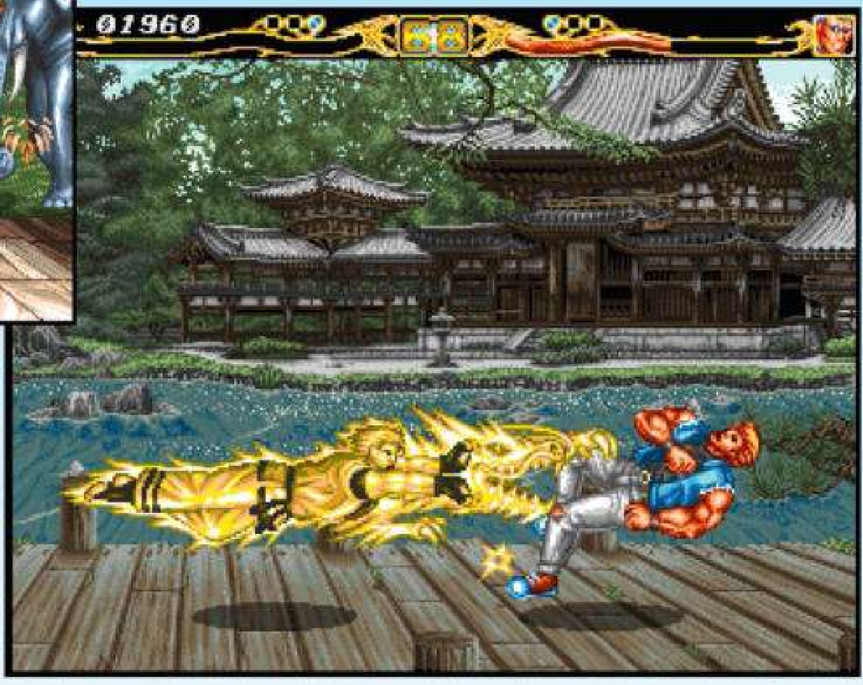
■ Lorentz is the true bad guy, a businessman who used to run a criminal organisation which was destroyed by Jenshi. His nickname is Lethal Weapon and he uses all the tricks at his disposal to best his opponents.



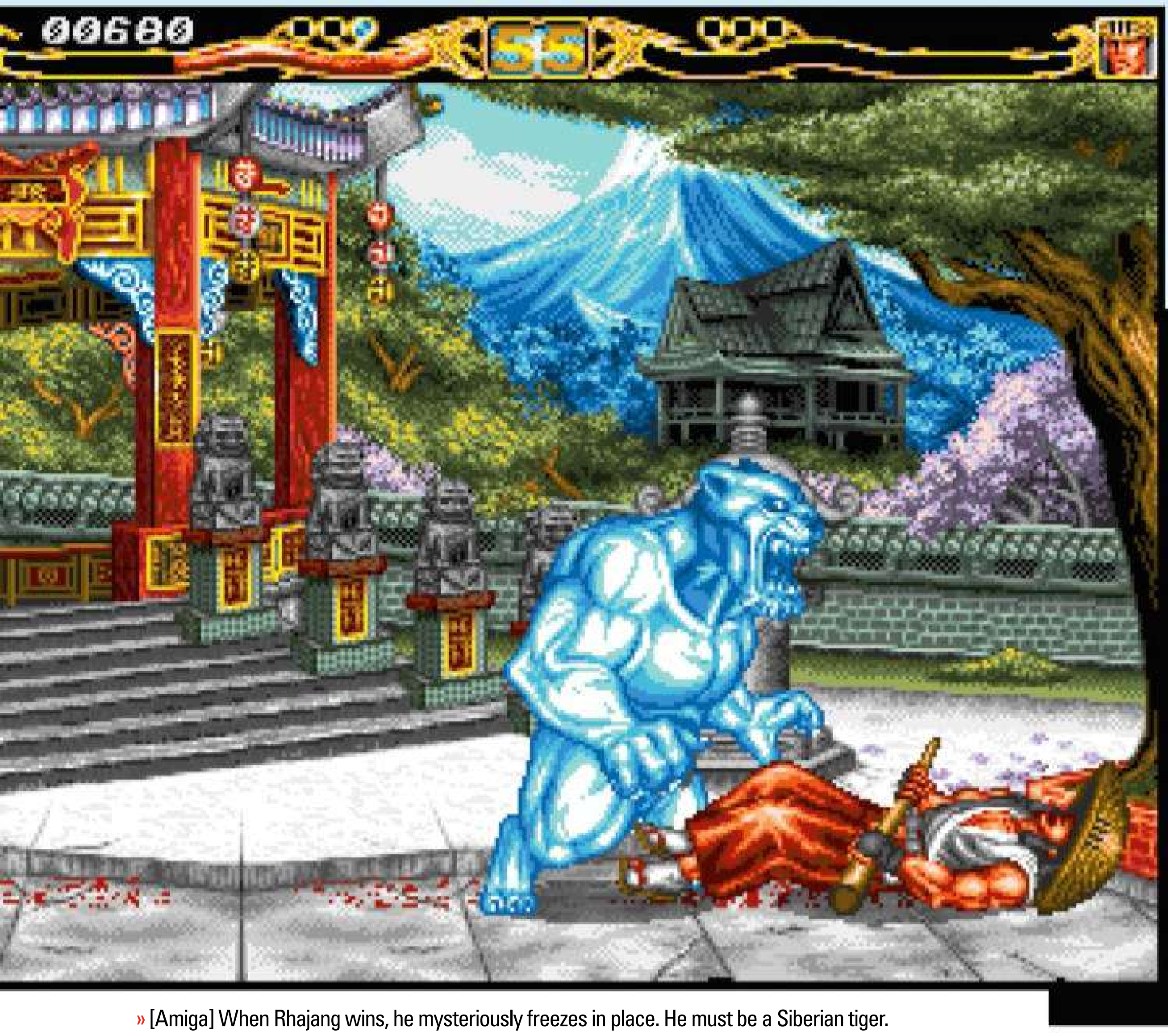
» [Amiga] Things start off well for Yadon and he immediately kicks Shuzar in his face…



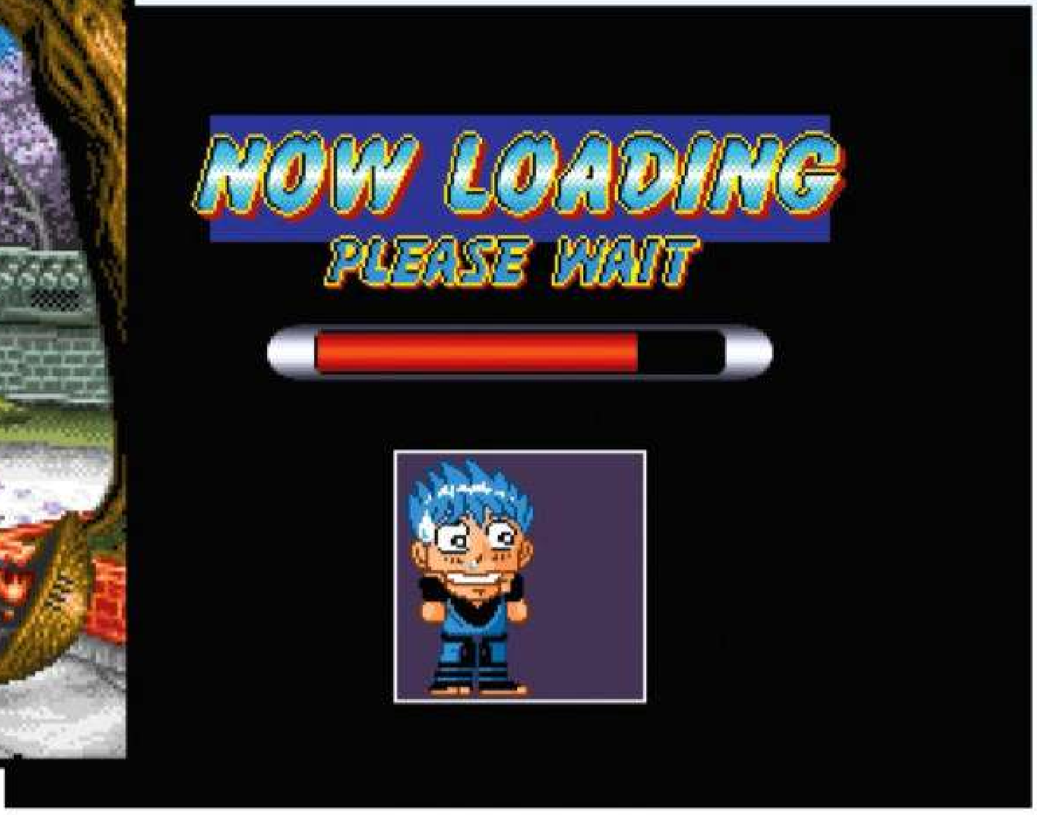
» [Amiga] …Shuzar retaliates and uses his viper spirit to unleash a deadly special move. Poor Yadon.



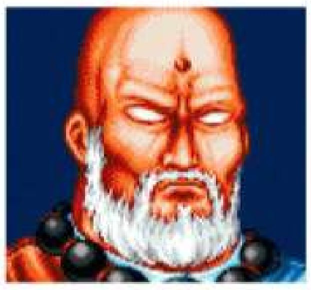
» [Amiga] In a move clearly inspired by Shiryu from *Saint Seiya*, Kento goes all dragon on us.



» [Amiga] When Rhajang wins, he mysteriously freezes in place. He must be a Siberian tiger.

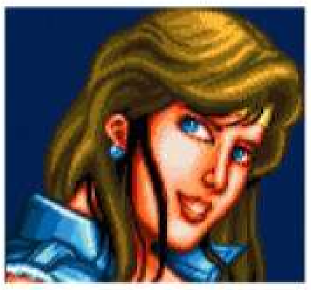


MEET THE WARRIORS OF FIGHTIN' SPIRIT



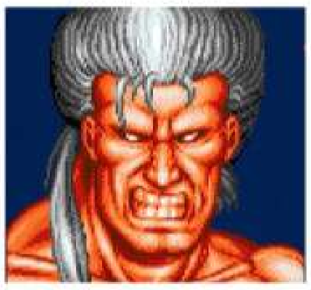
SHUZAR

■ This fighter is a complete mystery, as legend has it he should be the master of the School Of Orion and he is supposed to have trained Jenshi. But not much else is known, except for his supernatural abilities of mind control over animals.



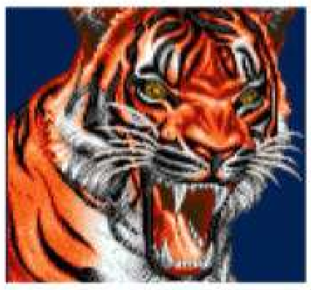
SHEILA NASH

■ Sheila is an undercover CIA agent, posing as a dolphin trainer in Miami, who also used to be Eric's sweetheart. Despite her work being mainly about reporting to her superiors, she has been trained in martial arts, so she can easily defend herself.



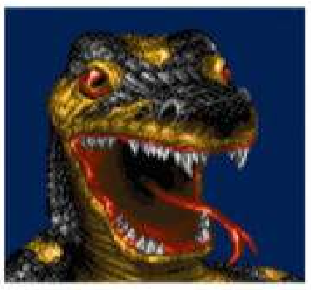
SHIRO ASUKA

■ Shiro grew up training with Kento, but he was soon thrown out by his master because of his bad behaviour and jealousy towards his friend. Since then, his one goal in life is proving to his master that he is the best by beating Kento in a fight.



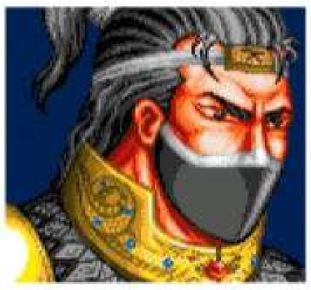
RHAJANG

■ Rhajang is a tiger and, well, he is no ordinary animal at all. There is an urban legend that Rhajang was created as part of an experiment to create the most deadly animal on the planet by splicing human DNA with that of a tiger. It pretty much worked.



YADON

■ Yadon is a true animal, and one of the most deadly on the planet. It was found bleeding to death in a cave in Indonesia. Yadon brutally murdered its saviours without a second thought, despite their valiant attempts to save it.



JENSHI YAMAMOTO

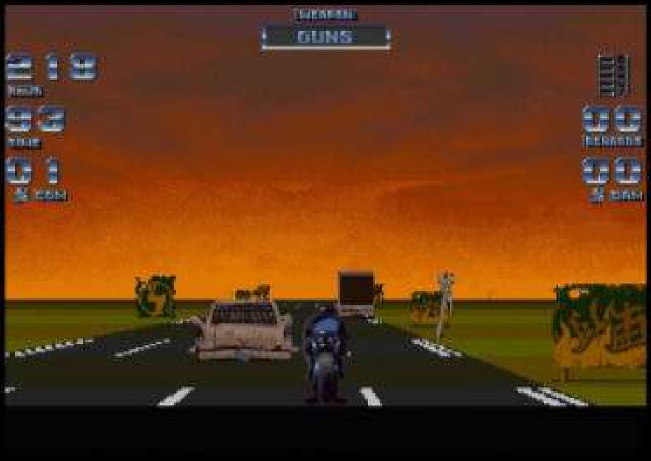
■ Jenshi is the head of Hikawa, a ruthless international crime syndicate. He is the tournament's organiser and with his combat techniques he is considered to be one of the most dangerous men on the planet.

BEYOND FIGHTING SPIRIT

OTHER RELEASES FROM LIGHT SHOCK SOFTWARE

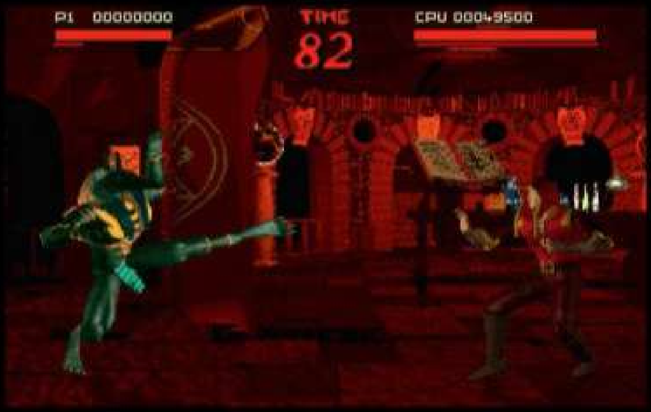
BLACK VIPER

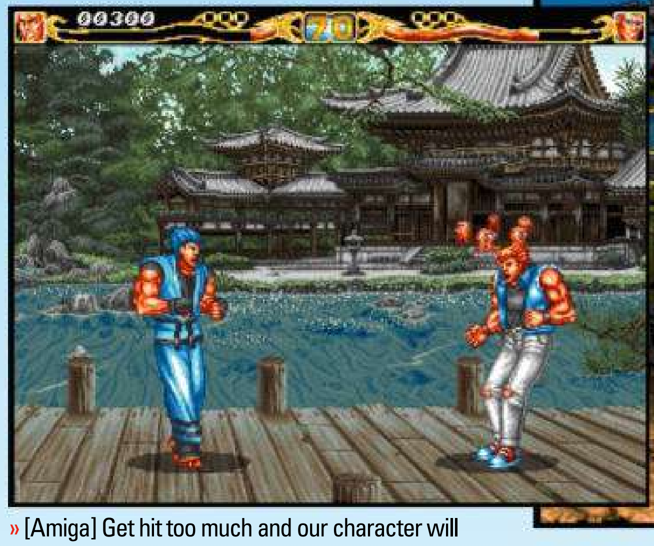
■ This is an action racer in the style of *Road Rash* and *Street Hawk* that had been in development by the Italian team DEX since 1993. Light Shock would help with debugging, along with polishing and enhancing the title for release. The main new feature would be an animated intro, exclusive for the Amiga CD32. It was also published by NEO and seemed to sell very few copies. Marco Biondi remembers the game was essentially ready for release when DEX sent it to Light Shock, where it was polished and had bugs fixed, which ended up being a six-month process… *Black Viper* was also one of the last commercial CD32 releases.



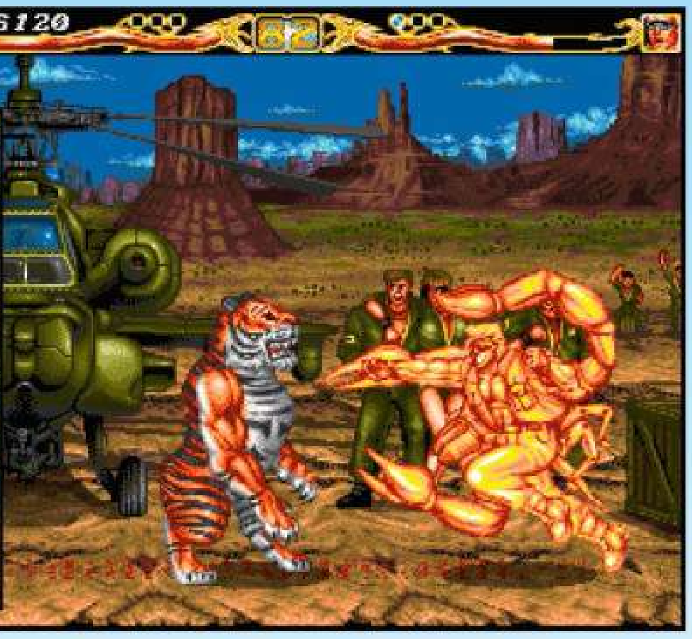
PRAY FOR DEATH

■ This was the final game released by Light Shock and was a fighting game in the style of Rare's *Killer Instinct*. Vysio Arte Elettronica originally sent its demo to Light Shock and used Lightwave 3D for the characters and Real3D for the backgrounds. Massimiliano Calamai mentions that the team's objective was bringing that arcade quality of *Killer Instinct* to PC. This was easier said than done and Marco Biondi mentions the game took more work than all the others, as the publisher, Virgin, was very careful in wanting to release a bug-free game. Matteo Tesser also created a video compression algorithm from scratch in order to make the intro video fit on a single CD.





» [Amiga] Get hit too much and our character will start seeing little octopi (tako) floating around.



» [Amiga] Uh oh, Burke has unleashed the spirit of the scorpion and its deadly sting.

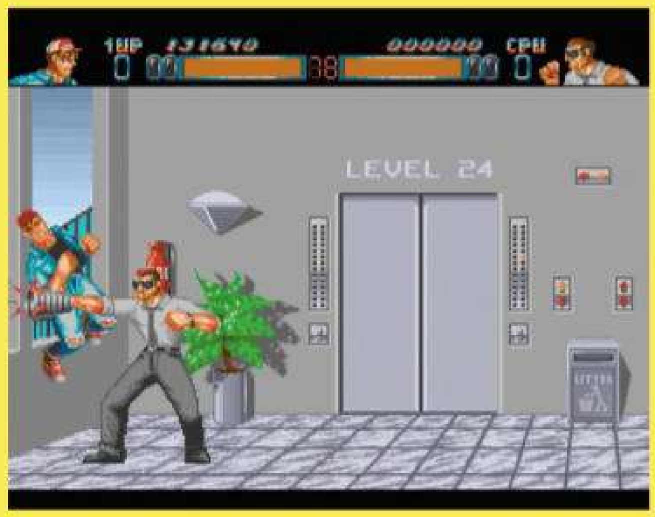
▶ answer from Austrian publisher Neo, which was also a young company, being founded only two years prior. It was the publisher which insisted on changing the original name of the game, to the apparently more easily marketable *Fightin Spirit'*. But, there was a problem as the game was coming out at the worst possible time. Neo also insisted that it wanted a PC port, otherwise, it warned Light Shock that the game would sell very little. So much so that, as Massimiliano recalls, "Neo told us that if we wanted more money than what they were offering, which honestly wasn't much, we were free to find a new publisher. We tried and could not find anyone, I remember Team17 saying that if we had shown them *Perpetual Craze* three years before, it would have been a hit! In the end, we had no choice but to swallow our pride and stick with Neo."

Francesco confirms that, but also comments that even if they had managed to port the project on PC – in 1995 – that would have not been interesting for an international publisher. "An SNK-style beat-'em-up for MS-DOS, back then, would have basically no market to speak of and Dynamic Style was so persistent in wanting to finish and release it on Amiga, that a possible conversion was never even considered." Apparently, some of the members of the Dynamic Style team do remember working on a prototype that would run on PC, but they soon gave up on finishing it.

> "WE GOT NO MONEY OUT OF THE WHOLE DEAL, NOT EVEN AN ADVANCE PAYMENT
> FRANCESCO IORIO

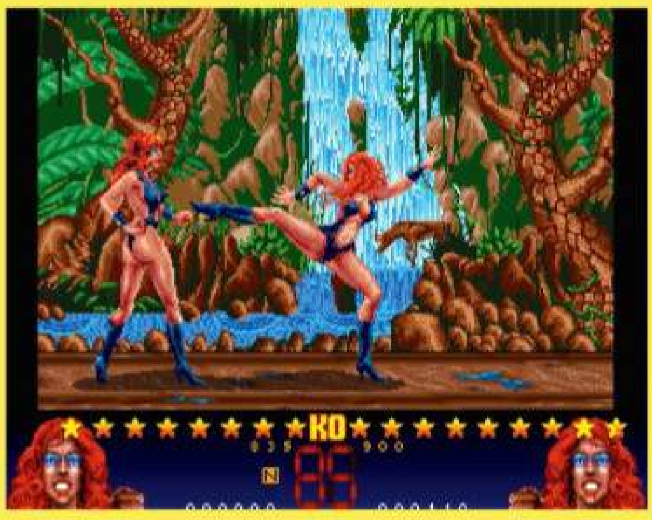
After winning the MCW Amiga award for Game Of The Year in 1996, *Fightin' Spirit* was released, receiving mostly positive reviews from magazines such as *Amiga CD32* and *Amiga Format*. It is still remembered by many to be one of the best fighting games on Commodore's home computer. Despite its acclaim, it did not go on to sell impressive numbers or, apparently, to really sell anything at all! By the mid-Nineties, the market for the Commodore Amiga had trickled down to very small numbers. Marco Biondi says, "I think if it had been released even three months before, things would have been very different, but that was impossible, I can attest that we were working as fast as we could." The same problem would also affect the sales of the other Light Shock game released by Neo, *Black Viper*.

HERE COME NEW



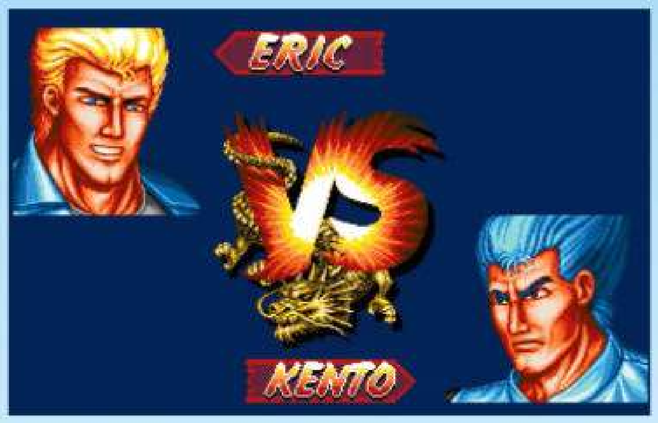
BODY BLOWS

■ In 1993, Team17 attempted to fill the gap for a decent beat-'em-up on the Amiga with this okay effort. While it featured a variety of characters and smooth graphics, its average fighting mechanics meant that it couldn't compete with the arcade classics it wanted to emulate.

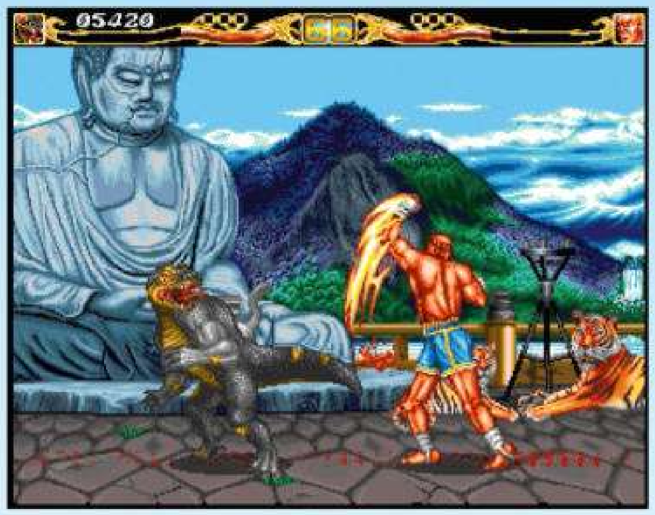


DANGEROUS STREETS

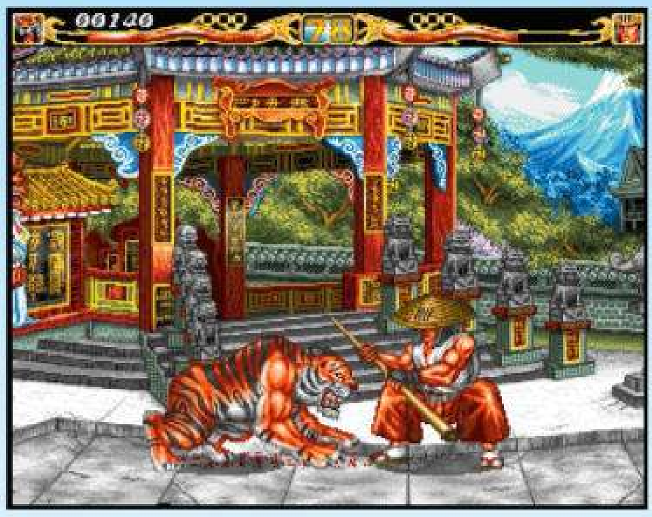
■ This was another fighting title developed by an Italian team, but unlike *Fightin' Spirit*, it misses the mark completely. It is considered by many to be one of the worst beat-'em-ups ever for any platform, mainly because of its terrible roster of fighters and chaotic gameplay.



» [Amiga] USA vs Japan in a fight to the death. Who will triumph?



» [Amiga] Tong Lee seems to have borrowed most of his special attacks from *Street Fighter*'s Sagat…



» [Amiga] The characters' animations are really impressive, granted they have to be seen in motion…

At the time, many seemed to complain that they could not even find *Fightin Spirit'* in shops. Interestingly, *Fightin Spirit'* did seem to have a lot of demand in the United Kingdom, so much so that, in 2000, it would be re-released, on CD only, by Alive Mediasoft. This would probably make Light Shock's hypothesis of Neo not really going out of its way to distribute it, probably not far from the truth. Massimiliano remembers that the team did all that was in its power to check that Neo was acting in good faith. "They kept reporting that the game sold nothing and, as much as we were able to check, these reports seemed to be correct. It is fair to say that *Fightin Spirit'* only rewarded us… spiritually, since the finished product was indeed one of the best fighting games on the Amiga. Economically, we got nothing out of it and when we told the Dynamic Style team that we could not give them any money, well, they got quite angry with us. I understand their reactions but, honestly, it was quite frustrating for us as well." Giacinto mentions how the game was the result of years of gruelling work by him and his team of friends and, having nothing to show for it at the end, was really insulting.

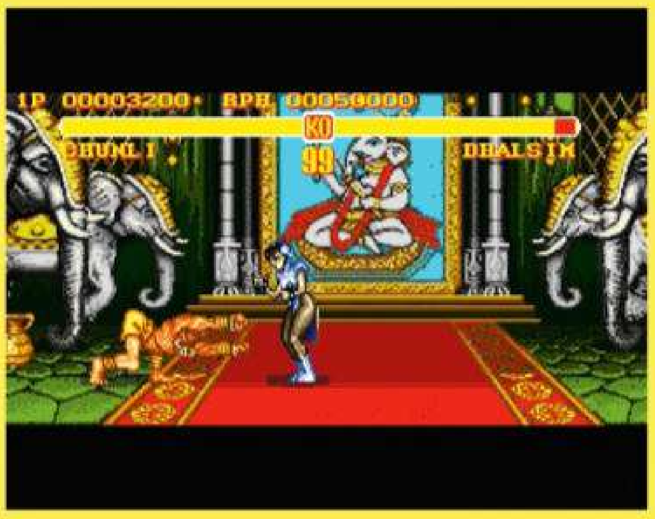
While talking about the publishing deal with the Austrian company, Francesco still feels that the overall agreement was a disaster, "We got no money out of the whole publishing contract, not even an advance payment. Nothing. It is correct to say that all work on both *Fightin Spirit'* and *Black Viper* was done for free. This clearly contributed to the guys' pretty sour mood, and obviously ours as well. I have to mention that Neo did provide us with an Amiga CD32, to work on and test that version of *Fightin Spirit'*, but that was the extent of their financial support."

Dynamic Style had another title in the works, *USA Racing*, a top-down racer in the style of *Super Off Road*, but the game would be cancelled after finishing *Fightin' Spirit*. The team did not develop anything else and disbanded soon after. Light Shock would also be short-lived, as it dissolved shortly after the release of *Pray For Death*, in 1996 as Massimiliano and Francesco had different ideas on where the company should go. The final months in the software house were also marred by discussions and Dynamic Style being particularly angry with the two original founders. "I think everyone's young age (I was the oldest at 24) led them to believe their games were perfect – beautiful, fun to play and unique. So, when they discovered that they were not selling like hot cakes and they weren't getting any money, they started to blame Light Shock, and our publishers, both Neo and Virgin. I can definitely understand that, but there was little that we could have done. Honestly I hope that, by now, everyone has calmed down," concludes Marco.

Apparently that does not seem to be the case for everyone involved in *Fightin' Spirit*, as Giacinto mentions he'd really like to not have any more contact with the former Light Shock members. He also remembers Dynamic Style actually wanted to sue both Neo and Light Shock to, at least, get some money out of the deal, but, in the end, had to drop the idea, since the team could not afford to hire a lawyer. But, at least, he's satisfied that people are still playing and being surprised by the quality of *Fightin Spirit'* to this day. He concludes on a final note, "If I had to remake the game today… well, it would still be in 2D, no way it would be in 3D. But for sure, I would not use Deluxe Paint again!" *

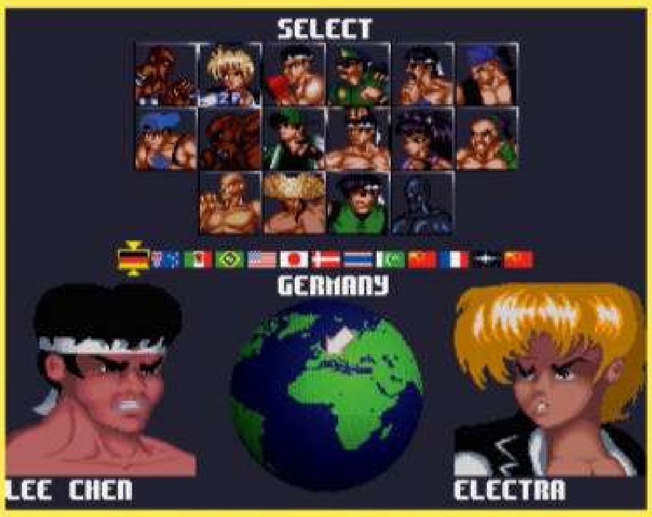
CHALLENGERS!

KEY AMIGA GAMES FIGHTIN' SPIRIT FACED OFF AGAINST



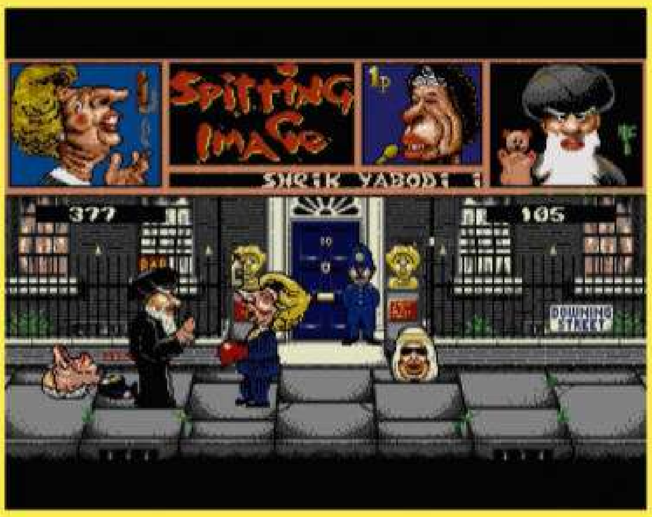
SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE NEW CHALLENGERS

■ This arcade conversion saw release in 1995 and was developed by Freestyle. While it definitely played OK, it was a huge graphical downgrade compared to the arcade original, making it closer in visual style to the SNES version.



SHADOW FIGHTER

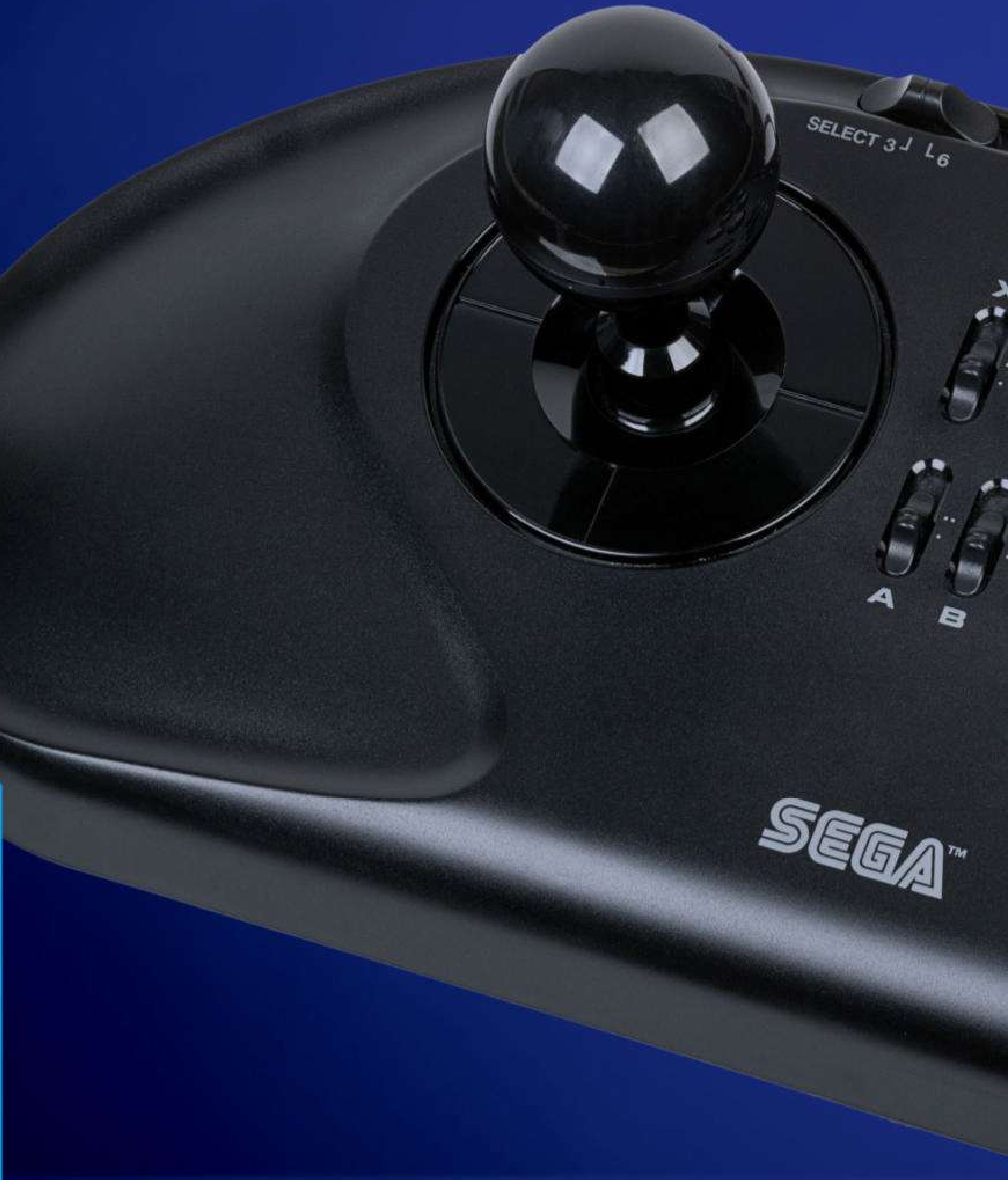
■ Another beat-'em-up made in Italy in 1995, this time by NAPS team. *Shadow Fighter* sported impressive graphics, solid gameplay and an interesting roster of characters. It's considered by many Amiga fans as a real contender to the throne of best fighting game on Commodore's computer.



SPITTING IMAGE: THE COMPUTER GAME

■ A tie-in with the infamous UK show, it allows players to fight as several world leaders, including Margaret Thatcher and the Pope. While it was a novel idea, the below-average gameplay failed to make it a big hit.

Peripheral Vision



Arcade Power Stick II fact

■ The model pictured is the North American version – the European one has red Start and Mode buttons, and the Japanese one has a microswitched joystick and blue buttons.

ESSENTIAL GAME

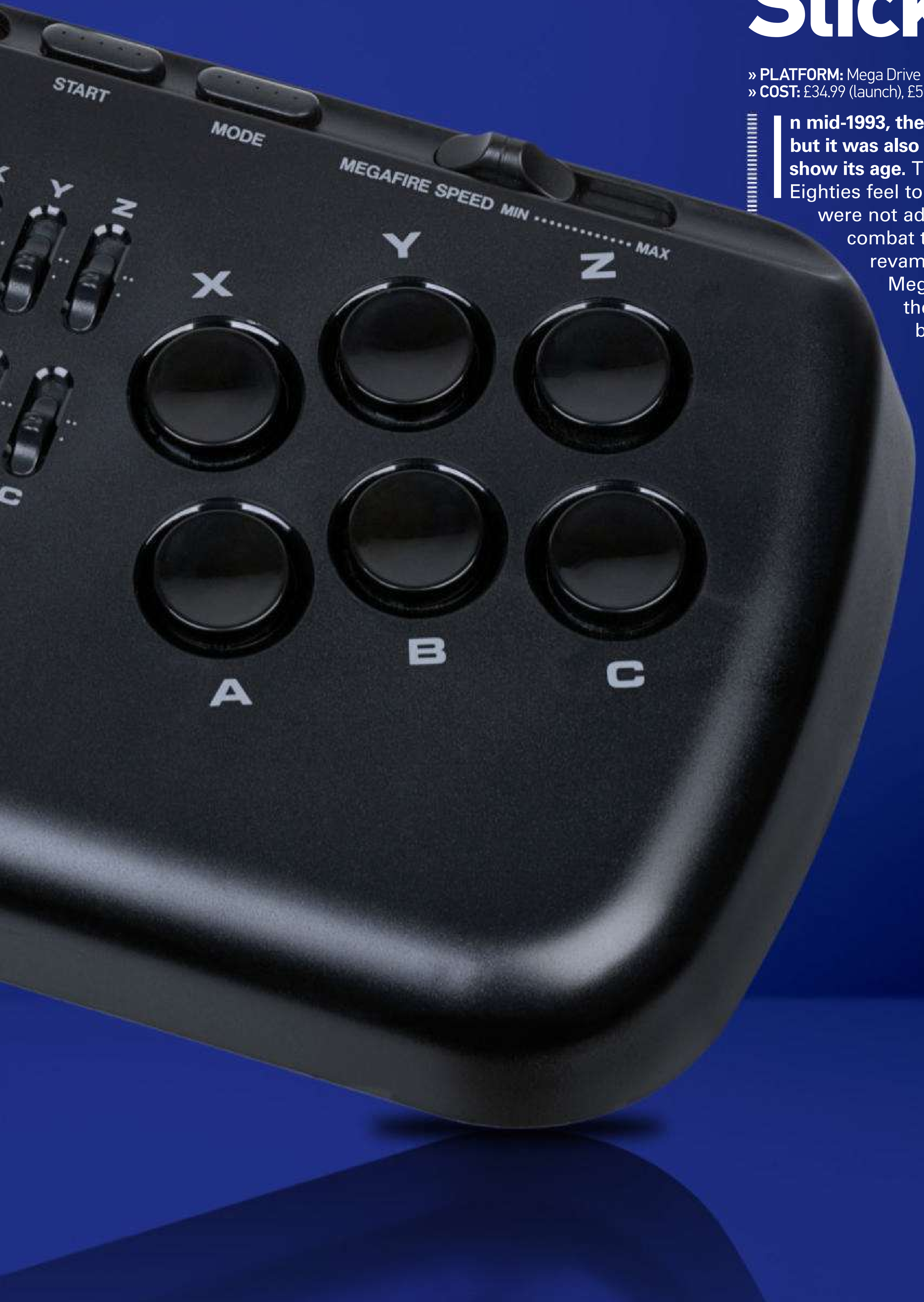
MORTAL KOMBAT II

Though *Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition* was the game that accompanied six-button Mega Drive controllers in most regions, its biggest rival was also greatly improved by the extended control scheme. High and low punches are no longer forced to share a button, and the block command moves to the face buttons allowing players to pause with the Start button. Of course, for the Mega Drive owner who truly has to have everything, the improved 32X version of the game benefits just as much from the Arcade Power Stick II.

06 WINS
98
RAYDEN
SUB-ZERO

Arcade Power Stick II

» PLATFORM: Mega Drive **» YEAR:** 1993
» COST: £34.99 (launch), £50+ (today, boxed), £40+ (today, unboxed)



In mid-1993, the Mega Drive had never been more popular, but it was also close to five years old and beginning to show its age. The hardware design definitely had an Eighties feel to it, and those three-button control pads were not adequate for the latest arcade hits. To combat this problem, Sega engaged in a major revamp and introduced the Mega Drive II and Mega-CD II, plus peripherals to match. One of them was the Arcade Power Stick II, a six-button revision of the original device.

Since the Arcade Power Stick was popular, the basic form factor was retained, with the dedicated turbo-fire buttons omitted to make way for the X, Y and Z buttons. Turbo fire was retained though, with the same variable-rate slider as before, and a bank of switches to allow the function to be activated for each individual button. The Mode button was also added, alongside a switch to activate three-button mode in case of game compatibility problems. If you want to play fighting games on the Mega Drive, this is really the device to own. ✱

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

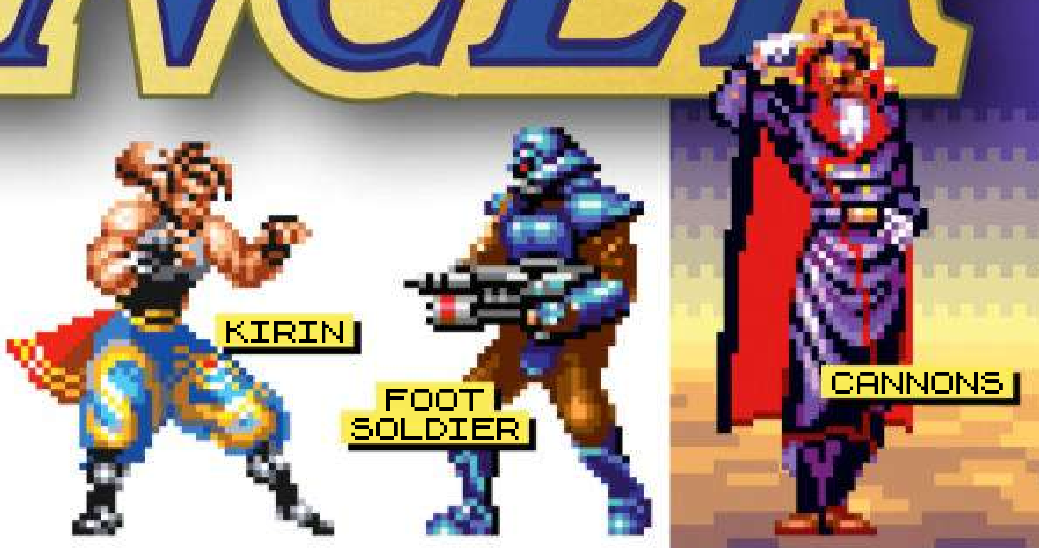
CANN

ULTIMATE GUIDE

ON DANCER

THIS OBSCURE ARCADE ACTION GAME ACTED AS AN UNOFFICIAL CONTINUATION OF THE STRIDER SERIES, AND WOWED PLAYERS WITH ITS VIBRANT COLOURS, OUTLANDISH BOSSES AND IMAGINATIVE LEVELS

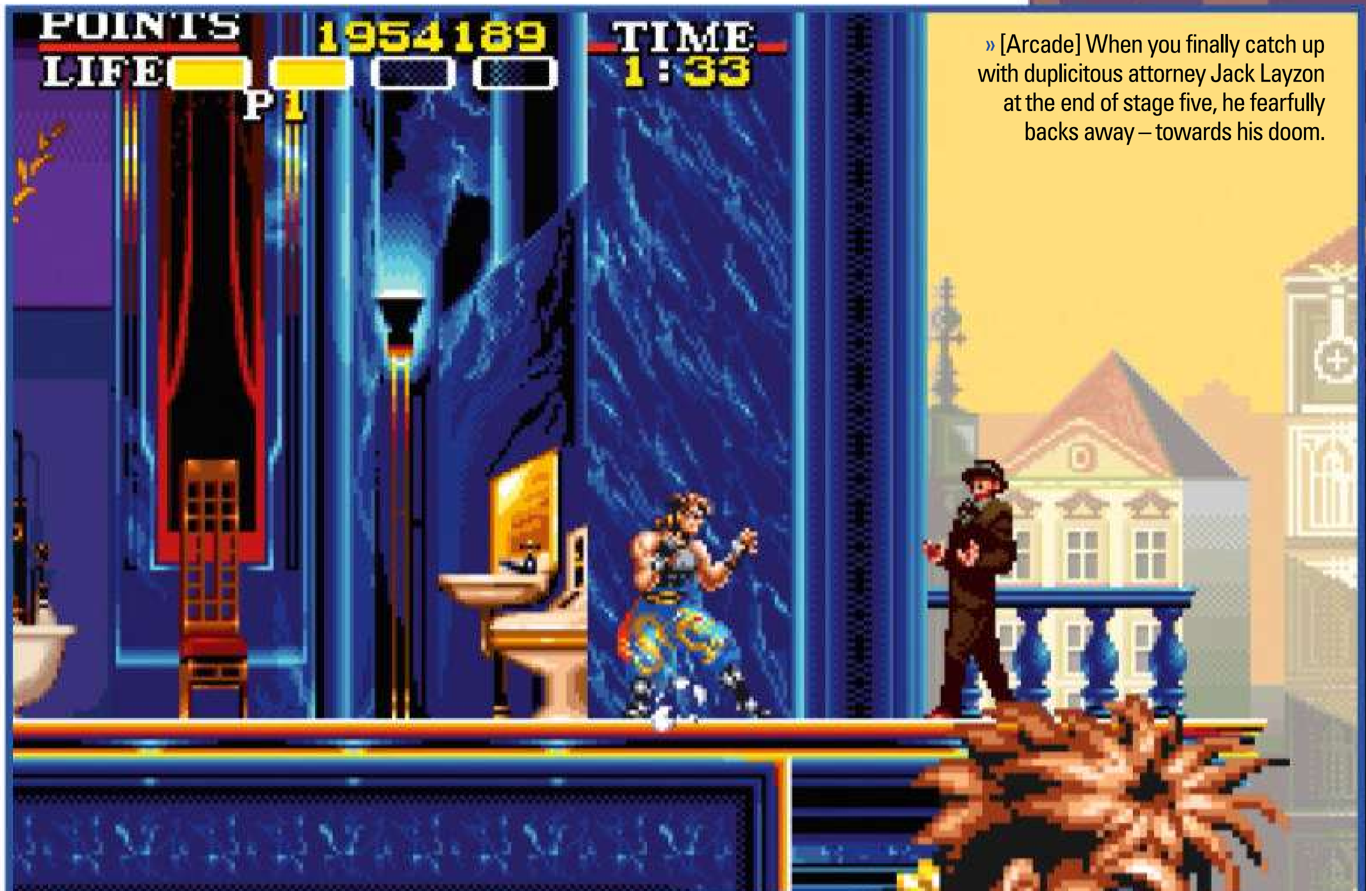
WORDS BY LEWIS PACKWOOD



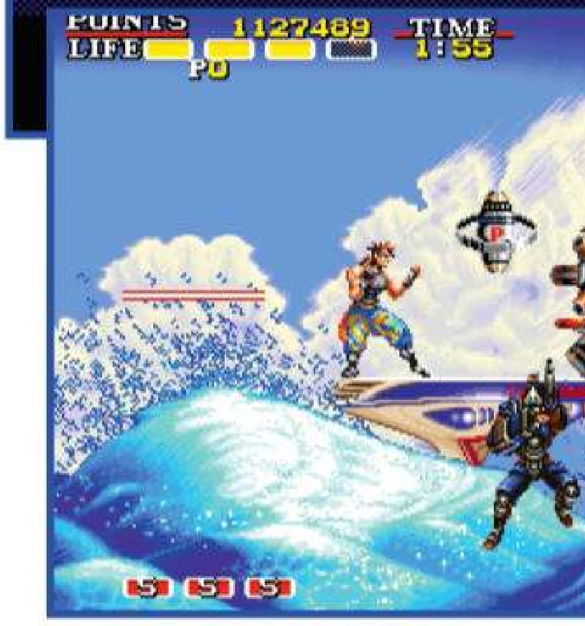
There's a good chance you've never heard of *Cannon Dancer*. That might be because you know it instead by the name *Osman*, the title it was released under in the West. Or it might be because the game was never ported to home consoles, remaining locked in the arcades, and never seeing an official release in Europe.

Then again, you might be all too aware of *Cannon Dancer*'s illustrious heritage as a spiritual sequel to the legendary *Strider* – a game that, even if you haven't played it, you're almost sure to know of (it's a favourite of our editor, who may have mentioned it once or twice in these pages). Released in arcades by Capcom in 1989, *Strider* was directed by Kouichi Yotsui, but he wasn't involved with the 1990 sequel, *Strider II*, which was developed by Tiertex. Nor did he work on Capcom's own arcade sequel *Strider 2*. Indeed, Yotsui left Capcom not long after the release of the original *Strider*, and after a brief stint at Takeru, a studio set up by several former Capcom employees, he joined the Tokyo-based game developer Mitchell Corporation, where he worked on *The Karate Tournament* (1992) and a tile-based puzzler called *Lady Killer* (1993).

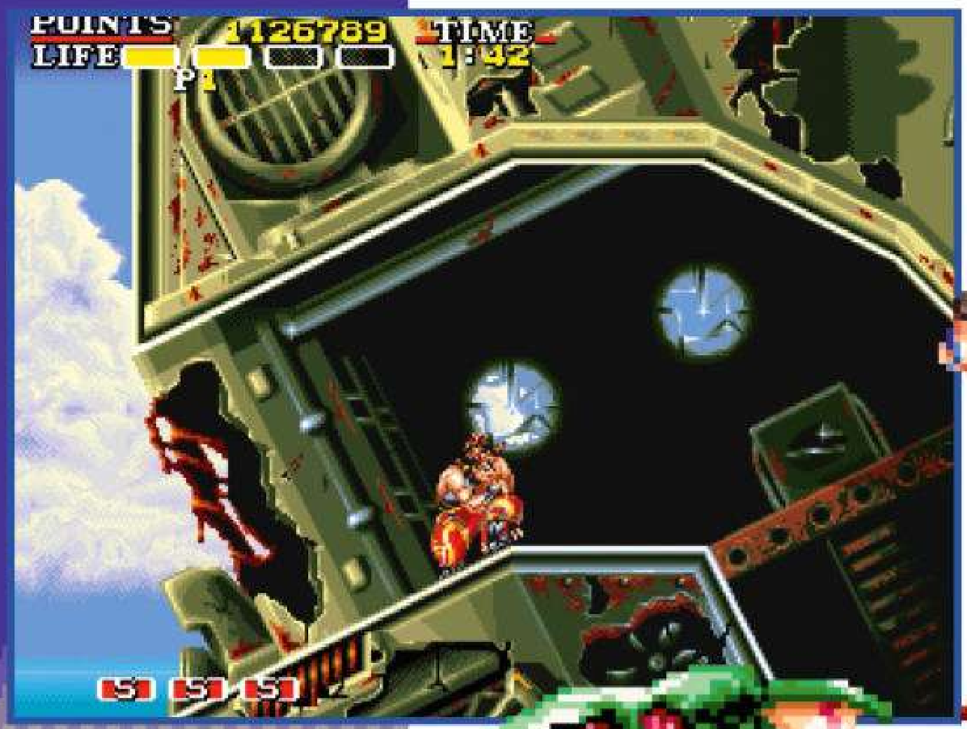
But the undoubted highlight of his time at Mitchell was the release of *Cannon Dancer* in 1996, a game that shares an enormous amount of DNA with *Strider*. The protagonist Kirin (renamed *Osman* in the US version, which incidentally is also the name of the founder of the Ottoman Empire) has an almost identical move set to Strider Hiryu, including his signature cartwheel jump and nifty floor slide. The main difference between the two is whereas Hiryu attacks with a blade, Kirin relies on kicks and punches, with a rather clever twist. Collecting a red power-up capsule during gameplay allows Kirin to generate a yellow body double ▶



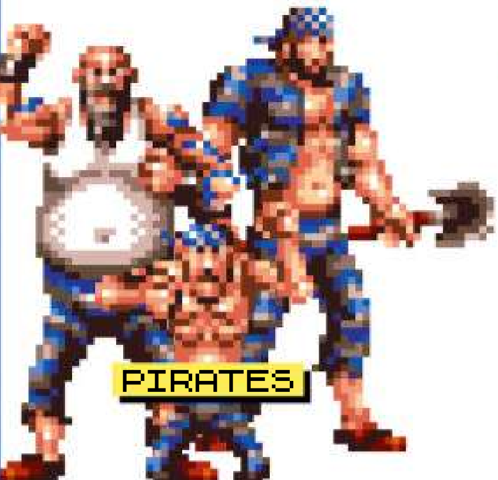
» [Arcade] When you finally catch up with duplicitous attorney Jack Layzon at the end of stage five, he fearfully backs away – towards his doom.

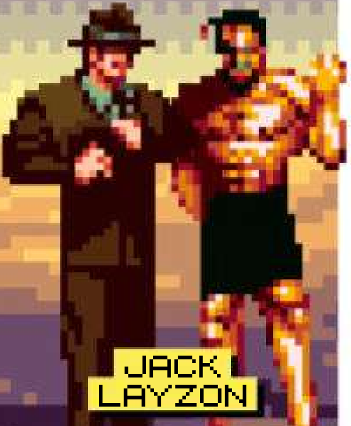


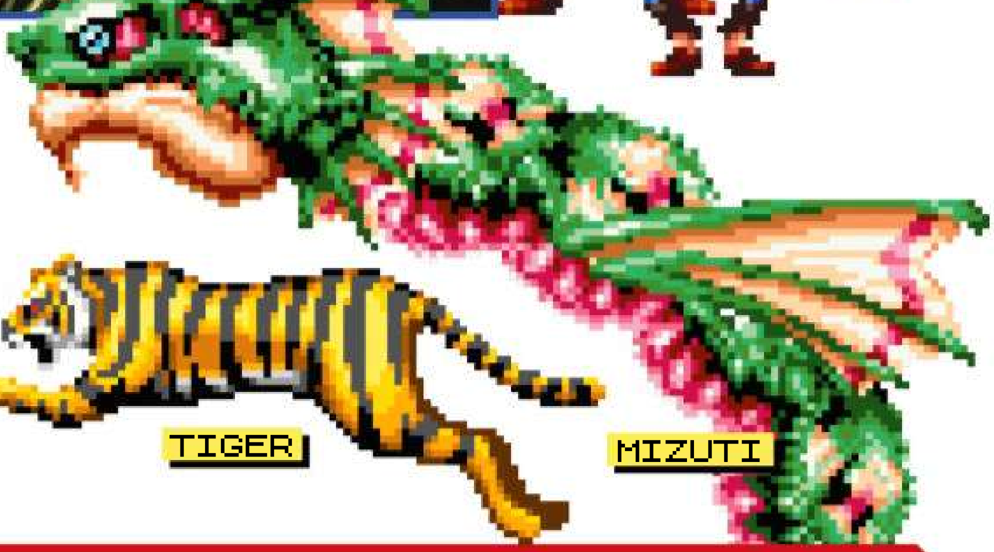
» [Arcade] Kirin hops aboard a tiny boat at the end of stage four, which surfs over some seriously impressive waves.



» [Arcade] Stage four sees Kirin board a sinking warship, where the deck is pitched at a crazy angle







whenever he attacks, thus doubling the power of his punches. But the real advantage of this is that Kirin can leave the invulnerable body double in place to keep attacking while he retreats to a safe distance, a strategy that's key to defeating many of the game's tricker bosses. By continuing to collect power-ups, Kirin can generate up to four body doubles at the same time (see the Magic Trousers boxout).

Within the first few seconds of starting *Cannon Dancer,* you know you're going to be in for an absolutely wild ride. Kirin is dropped into the futuristic city of Agadan on the Persian Gulf ('Gran' in the Japanese original) and the first soldier you meet literally explodes in a shower of blood on contact with your mighty kicks. This is a game that doesn't do half measures. Within moments you've eliminated a small army of grunts and laser-shooting four-legged robots, not to mention spinning gold statues that peel back their faces to reveal guns. Then you're met with a chap dressed like a TV Gladiator stood atop a futuristic limo, which rises up to reveal the first of many mini-bosses: three statues locked in gravity-defying poses, which pelt you with lightning and butterflies. Like we said, wild.

The game continues in this vein throughout. Every few steps you're faced with a brand-new foe or a dazzling piece of level design. It's relentless and brilliant. The gameplay changes from moment to moment, with fresh ideas being constantly tossed into the mix. One minute you're battling a giant bell-shaped automaton on spindly legs, then the next you're fighting off a tiger before running hell for leather from a runaway truck. It never stops, and you never know what to expect next. Plus, Kirin's ability to hang from or climb up almost any surface lends *Cannon Dancer* a feeling of dynamism and agility as you elegantly leap and swing around the screen.

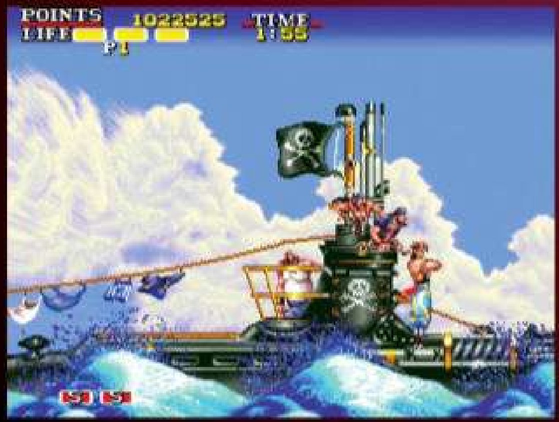
The plot is suitably outlandish. Set in a late-21st century where the whole world is run by a body known as the Federation, the game begins with the Federation's attorney general, Jack Layzon, ordering you to eliminate a cultist group known as Slaver, whose members worship a goddess who goes by the same name. However, after Kirin defeats the cultists, Layzon betrays him and sends him to be chained up and devoured by a beast in the desert. Kirin breaks loose, and after making his way through some mysterious caves, he escapes with the help of a band of pirates on a submarine. Along the way he faces off against rogue members of his futuristic mercenary unit, Teki, and finally corners Layzon, who is killed by the goddess Slaver. Then, in the final stage, Kirin confronts the goddess herself in a battle for control of the Earth. ▶

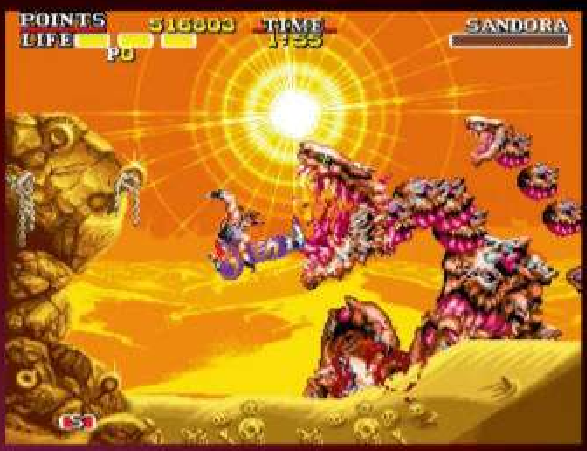
REVIVING CANNON DANCER

THE ARCADE GAME FINALLY COMES HOME

Cannon Dancer/*Osman* never received a conversion to home consoles back in the day. But now, nearly 27 years after its came out in the arcades, it's being released by ININ Games as a digital download for the Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5 and Xbox, in collaboration with game designer Kouichi Yotsui and artist Kiyoshi Utata.

In addition to the digital version, Strictly Limited Games is releasing two physical versions of the game for Switch, PS4 and PS5. The *Limited Edition*, priced at £27, includes the game and manual, while the *Collector's Edition*, priced at £62, features an art book, poster, arcade flyer, marquee stickers, photo frame, CD soundtrack, tenugui (Japanese hand towel), arcade coin and a diorama of the three Teki bosses you face in the game. These physical editions are available to preorder now (strictlylimitedgames.com), although there's no firm release date yet, aside from "early 2023".

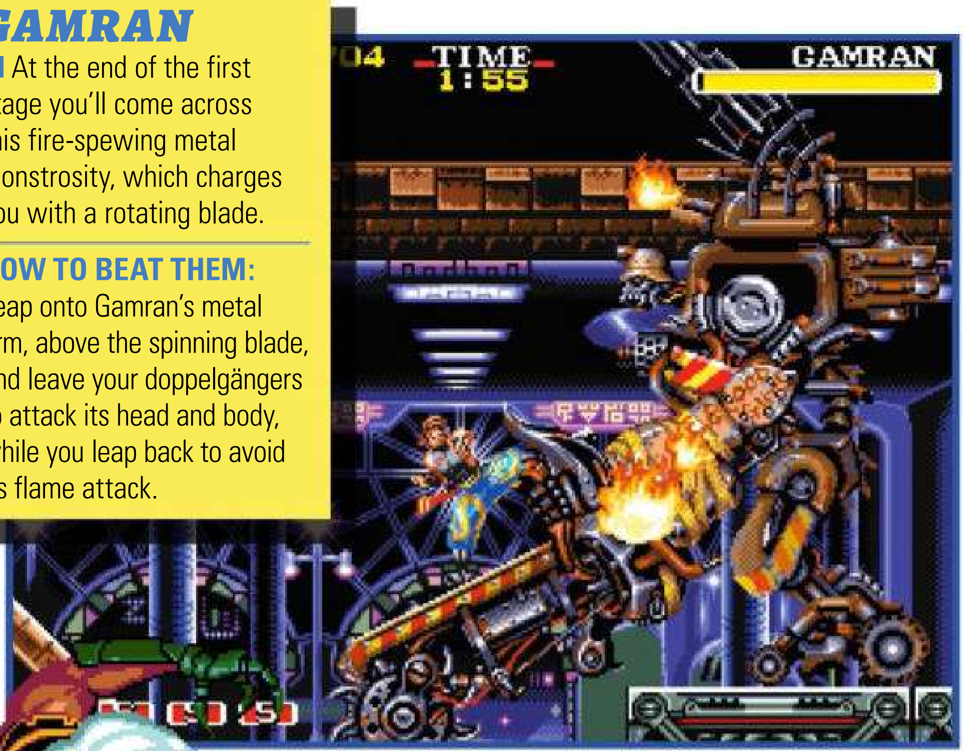




The re-release will add options to save and load your game, as well as a rewind feature, and you'll have the choice of switching between English and Japanese. Plus, players can choose to start a game with several optional enhancements, including a double jump, invincible jump, invincible slide and rapid-fire auto attack, and there are several cheat options, too, such as unlimited hit points. Cheats and unlimited enhancements are available in Standard mode, where trophies are disabled; to unlock trophies, you'll need to play in Challenge mode without the use of cheats, but with the option of using up to two enhancements.

BOSS RUSH

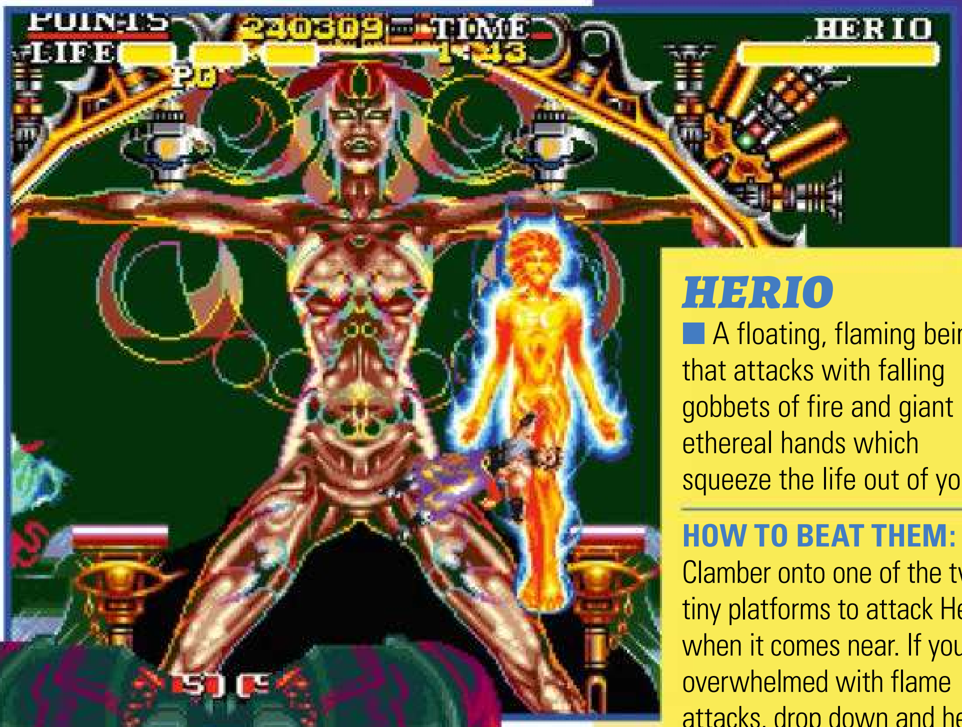
THE BOSSES OF CANNON DANCER AND HOW TO BEAT THEM



GAMRAN

At the end of the first stage you'll come across this fire-spewing metal monstrosity, which charges you with a rotating blade.

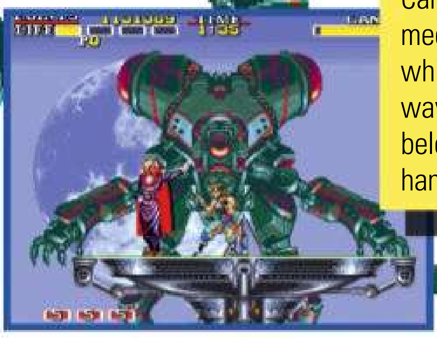
HOW TO BEAT THEM: Leap onto Gamran's metal arm, above the spinning blade, and leave your doppelgängers to attack its head and body, while you leap back to avoid its flame attack.



HERIO

A floating, flaming being that attacks with falling gobbets of fire and giant ethereal hands which squeeze the life out of you.

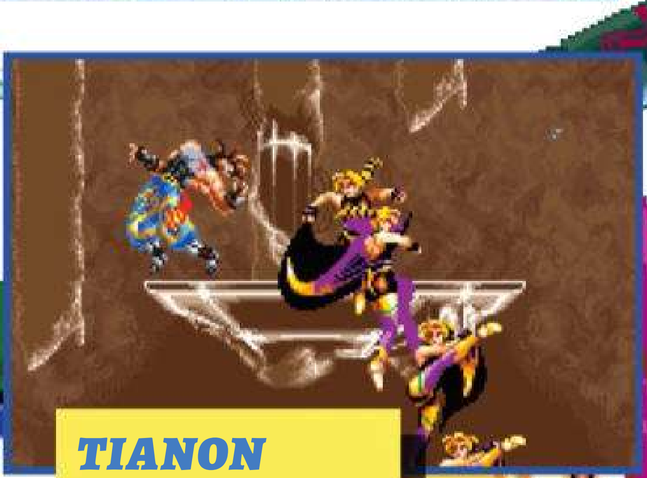
HOW TO BEAT THEM: Clamber onto one of the two tiny platforms to attack Herio when it comes near. If you're overwhelmed with flame attacks, drop down and head to the other platform.

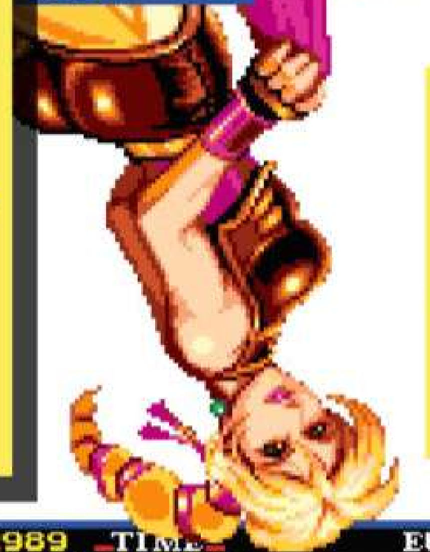


CANNONS

Cannons doesn't attack directly, instead ordering his giant robot to fling its head, hands or legs at you. As you do.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: As you leap around trying to hit Cannons, keep an eye on the mech in the background to see which bits are coming your way. The head comes from below, legs from above and hands from the side.





TIANON

Tianon floats around the screen and has a massive reach to her attacks – plus she can throw you with her cloak. Be careful.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Tianon is invulnerable while she's floating around, but you have a window of opportunity to hit her when she stops, and a hit will cancel her attack.

WILLF

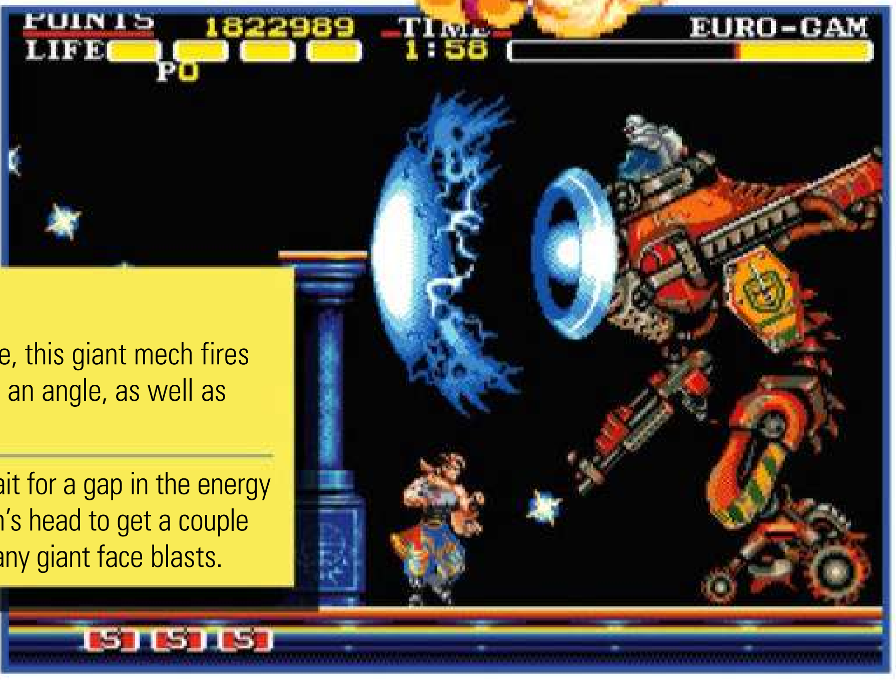
Willf's nifty hat also functions as a shield, a boomerang and a flying platform, and his nasty metal claws have a pretty big reach.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: This boss fight is merely a case of leaping in to get a few hits, then leaping away again before Willf attacks with his claws – but be prepared to avoid his boomerang hat.

SLAVER

Slaver has three phases: first, balls will fly from the sides of the screen, then lethal jelly beans will fly from the centre. Finally, she chucks the Earth at you. [What! - Ed]

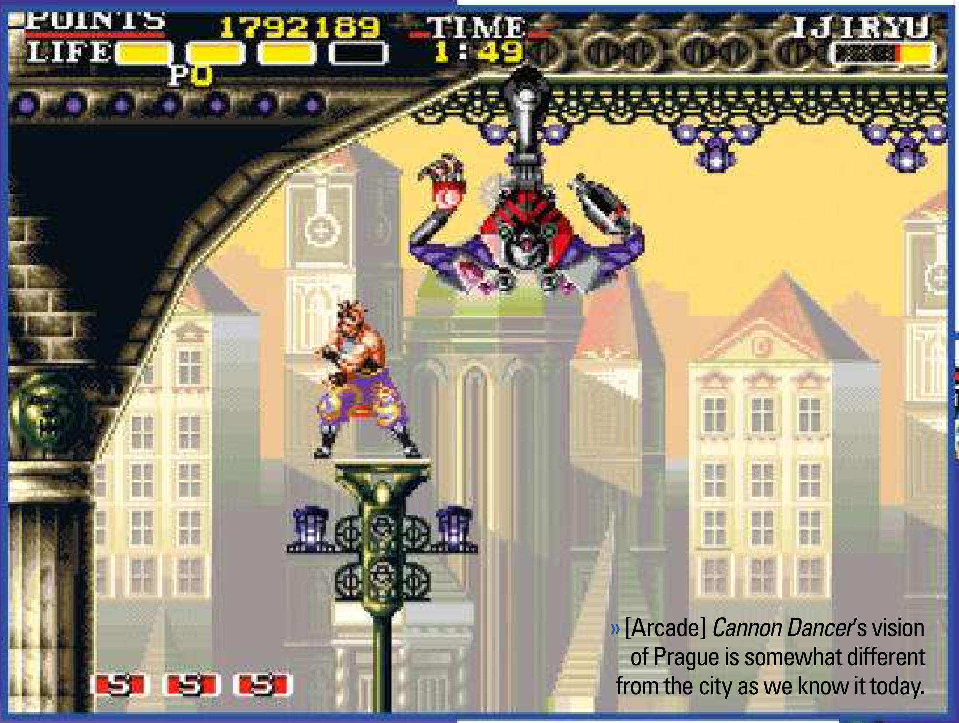
HOW TO BEAT THEM: It's all about the dodging. Keep moving to avoid the projectiles, and try to get inside the middle of the circle before it flies outwards.



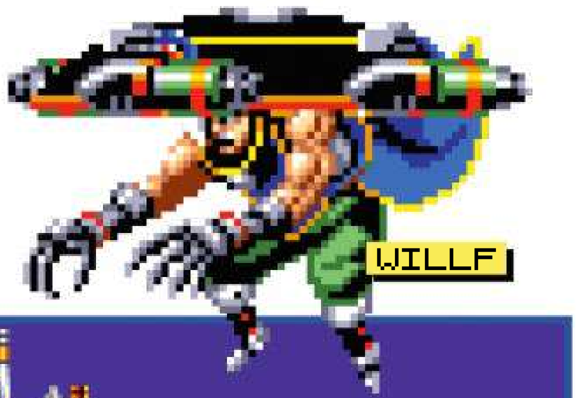
EURO-GAM

One of the toughest bosses in the game, this giant mech fires energy bullets that bounce off the floor at an angle, as well as powerful blasts from its face.

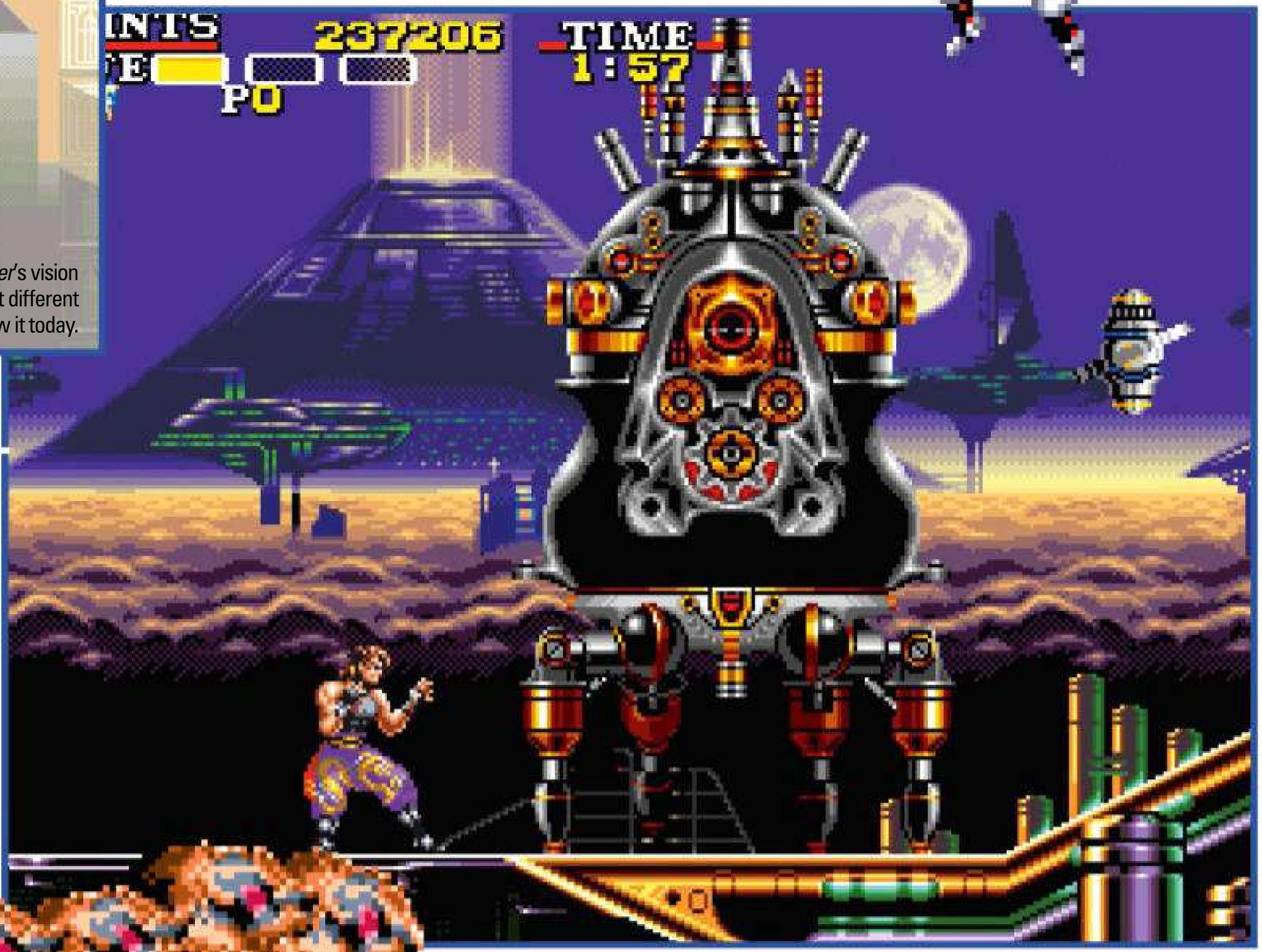
HOW TO BEAT THEM: The trick is to wait for a gap in the energy bullets, then quickly leap towards the mech's head to get a couple of hits, then run away before it looses off any giant face blasts.

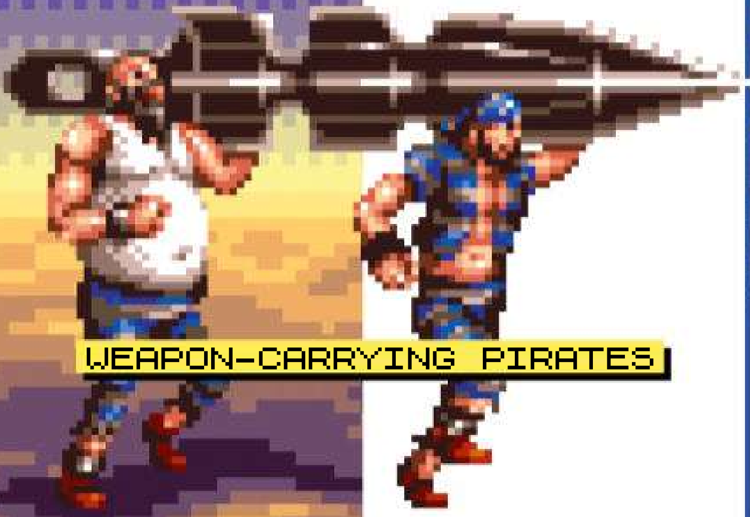


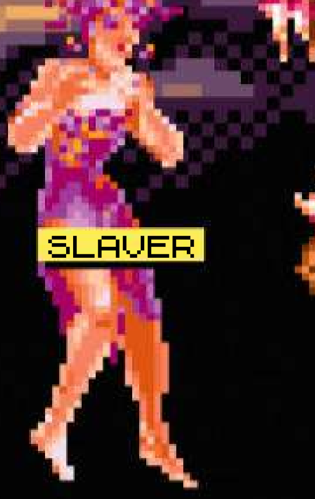
» [Arcade] *Cannon Dancer*'s vision of Prague is somewhat different from the city as we know it today.

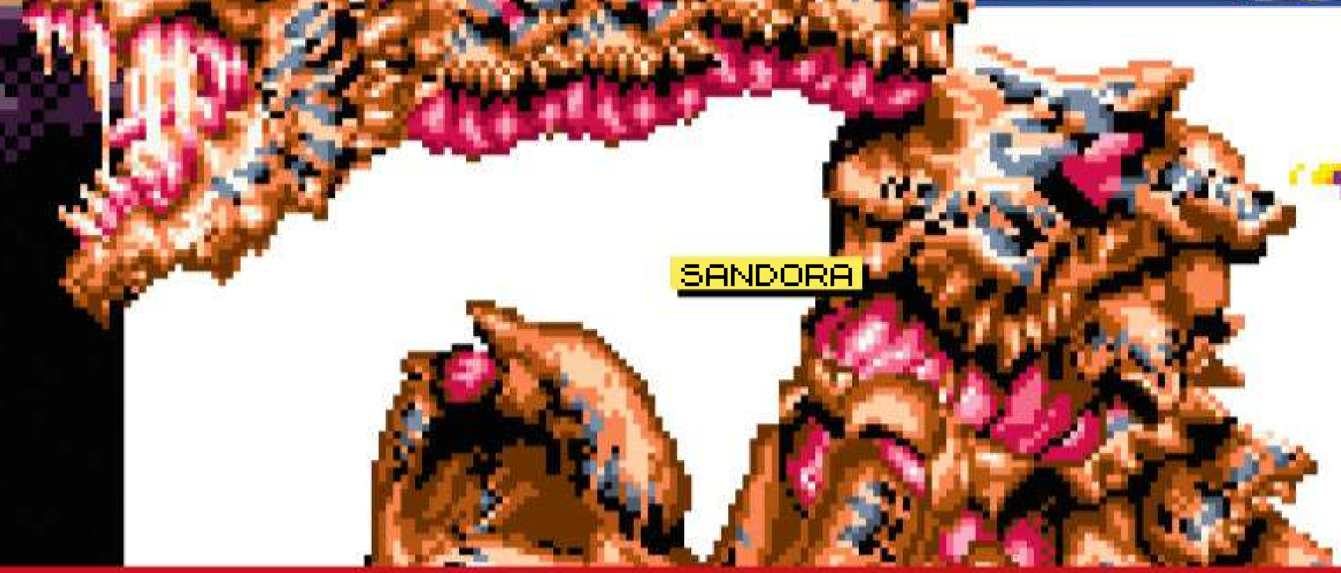


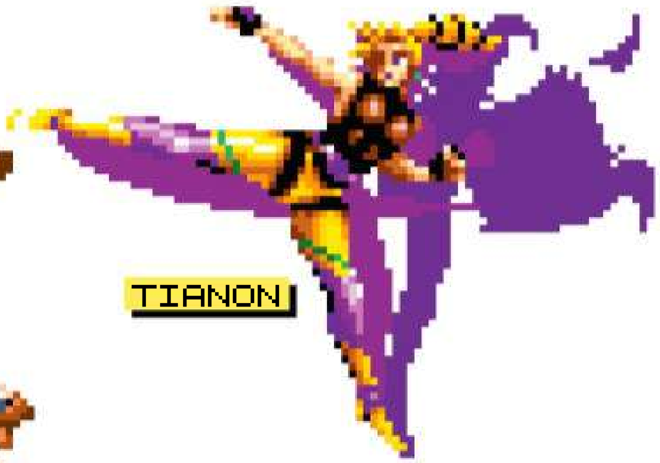
» [Arcade] This bell-shaped robot goes by the name of Visete, and its hobbies include leaping on people and releasing a cloud of tiny robot pals.









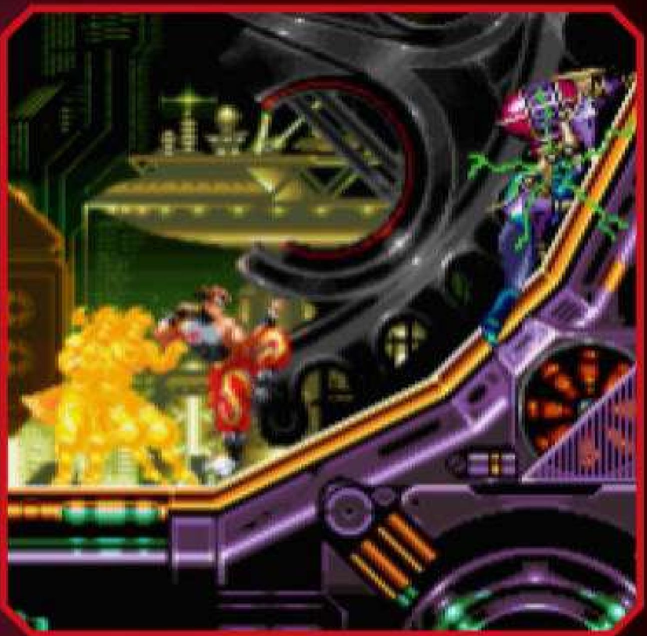


MAGIC TROUSERS

CANNON DANCER'S UNIQUE POWER-UP SYSTEM

Kirin's magnificent billowy trousers begin as a fetching shade of blue, but if you procure a red power-up gem, they morph to a lovely shade of purple. In addition to the pleasing colour change, Kirin gains the ability to create a yellow energy double of himself. Pressing the attack button fixes the body double in place, and it will continue attacking for a short while every time you press the button, before eventually disappearing. This is very handy for, say, depositing a body double next to a boss' weak spot, then leaping out of harm's way while the doppelgänger continues to attack.

Gaining a second power-up changes Kirin's trousers to red, and allows him to place a second body double, while a third power-up switches the powerful trousers to white and provides access to a whopping four body doubles. A fourth red gem causes the magic trousers to turn black, and adds blades of energy to Kirin's kicks, extending his hit range. However, unlike the other power-up levels, the super-duper black trousers only last a short while and soon revert to white – and if Kirin takes a hit at any point, he'll go down a trouser level.



There are six stages in total, with the first two being set in the neon-lit city of Agadan, while the third begins in the desert, but then descends into the ground and a complex of caves with spinning crystals. This is where you have a choice of routes, and your pick determines the order in which you face the three rogue Teki members: Cannons, Willf and Tianon. The fourth stage is probably the game's highlight, beginning with the pirates' submarine ramming an enemy warship, which you then board and fight through as it begins to sink and explode. Afterwards you leap onto a tiny skiff that glides over some enormous and beautiful waves while jetpack troopers swoop in to attack, and the stage ends with you being flown up into the sky by the goddess Slaver to face off against one of the Teki.

The fifth stage begins in a mysterious forest near Aleppo, but then, after entering a tunnel and fighting another Teki member, you somehow end up in Prague, the capital of the Federation. After Slaver appears and kills Jack Layzon, she spirits you away to a location in the Arctic with malevolent red skies, and resurrects all of the game's bosses for you to fight all over again. Yes, it's a classic boss rush, which makes the final level a considerable challenge – a challenge that's heightened by the fact that you're sent back to a checkpoint every time you die on this stage, rather than respawning exactly where you left off, as happens on earlier levels.

It's a tough old game then, although things are made slightly easier by the inclusion of a button that unleashes a Star Festival attack – essentially a smart bomb, where Kirin zips around the screen and destroys every enemy, or knocks a big chunk off a boss' health meter. The downside is that you only get three of these, and can't collect any more, although they're replenished when you die. Kirin also only has three hit points, although you can add a fourth by collecting a yellow power-up, while green power-ups restore a unit of health and blue ones restore all of your health.

The sheer imagination on display throughout *Cannon Dancer* is what makes it such a delight, and unmissable if you're a fan of the *Strider* series. Released at a time when videogames were rapidly pivoting towards 3D, it stands as a high watermark in pixel art, with huge, beautifully animated sprites, outlandish bosses and dazzling use of colour. But since it only saw a limited release in arcades, and was never ported to home consoles, relatively few people even know of its existence. Hopefully that will soon change with the upcoming re-release, and many more gamers will finally experience the chaotic, fever-dream world of *Cannon Dancer*. ✱

THE MINI MAKING OF CANNON DANCER

THE GAME'S DESIGNER AND ARTIST LOOK BACK ON THEIR WORK

Game designer Kouichi Yotsui (also known as Isuke), says that the brief for *Cannon Dancer* came from the Mitchell Corporation, "They asked us to make a *Strider*-like action game," he says. Yotsui had created *Strider* in 1989 when he worked at Capcom, and now he revisited the concept with a fresh take. "I wanted to create an adventure in a world and landscape not often featured in movies and games of the time." He notes that decision to change the game's name to *Osman* in the United States was down to Mitchell Corporation's president, Roy Ozaki.

The look of *Cannon Dancer* sets it apart from its spiritual predecessor, and the setting has been described as 'neon-lit cyberpunk Arabian' – although the game's artist, Kiyoshi Utata, doesn't necessarily think of it as Arabian. "It was not our intention to make the setting in an Arabic style," he explains, "but we were conscious of building a near-future, stateless image. The player, Kirin, could also be seen as Arabic in style, given his waist belt and trousers, but the concept is that of a Japanese steeplejack. I designed the design by adding impressive embroidery and the obi as a silhouette of the character to it.

"I think the art style, especially the world building, is very much inspired by our planner, Mr Yotsui," Utata continues. "For the boss designs, Mr Yotsui would prepare an image of the game, and then the in-house art team would compete for ideas. In the end, Mr Yotsui's choice was selected from among them. It was the culmination of everyone's ideas. This created diversity." For his part, Yotsui says his inspirations for the artwork included Wilbur Smith's adventure novels, Larry Niven's science-fiction novels and Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes.

Whereas Strider Hiryu used a blade, Kirin relies on his fists and feet alone, a decision that Utata says was partly down to prevailing trends in the arcade scene of the early Nineties. "At the time, fighting games were booming," he says. "All the games on the market were fighting games, and we were trying to create an unusual karate game that would not pander to the market. It was a time when the martial arts were getting a lot of attention. I think that had an influence on us.

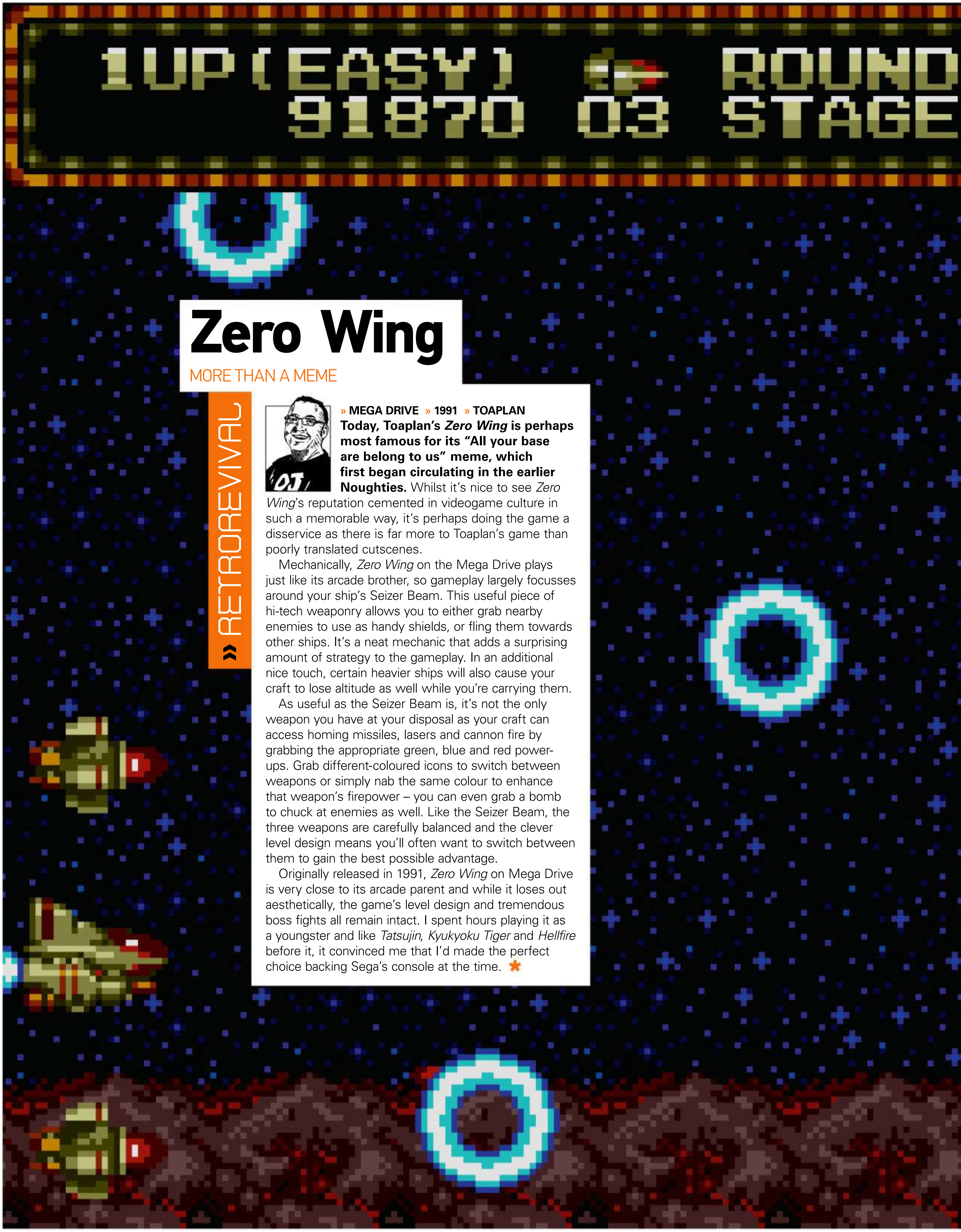
» Kiyoshi Utata meets fans at the Tokyo Game Show.

» From left to right: Dennis Mendel (cofounder of Strictly Limited Games), Kouichi Yotsui and Kiyoshi Utata at the Tokyo Games Show in September 2022.

"Hand-to-hand combat is essentially a last resort, using oneself as a deadly weapon to defeat the enemy," continues Utata. "If the loss of a weapon is a symbol of the inability to fight, then the ultimate strong weapon is the human being who can carry out all missions with only one body, without running out of ammunition. We thought that we could make him the ultimate character." It was Yotsui's idea to use multiple versions of the character as a form of power-up. "We looked for an interesting-looking expression that is not too powerful, not too convenient, and can be easily set to attack positions during play as a sub-weapon," he says.

He also says that development difficulties included tight scheduling and a low budget, and Utata adds that the graphics pushed the technology of the time. "We were so concerned with the main character's animation that we had to put pressure on the ROM capacity of the entire game," he says. "At the time of development, I felt that I had put out everything I had." Looking back, Yotsui is proud of "the fact that *Cannon Dancer* is a high-end tableau for 2D and dot art games, which are in decline as game production technology continues to change".

Kouichi Yotsui and Kiyoshi Utata attended the Tokyo Game Show in September 2022 to promote the re-release of the game (see Reviving *Cannon Dancer*), which Yotsui says has been welcomed by fans. Utata notes that several people came to seek them out at their booth. "I was very happy," he says. "It was also a little heartwarming to see young game designer students who want to work in the game industry playing and trying out various games for their studies."



Zero Wing

MORE THAN A MEME

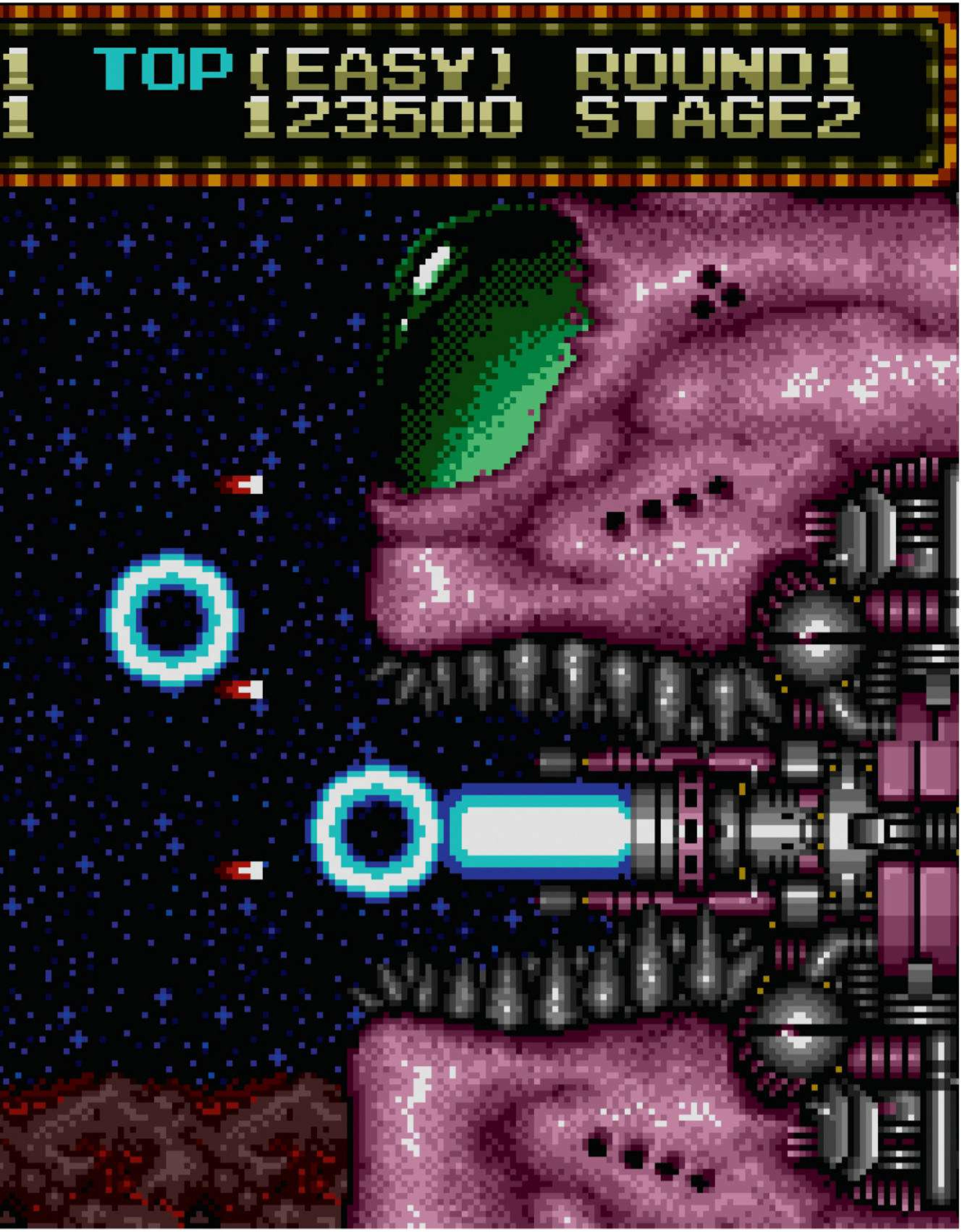
» MEGA DRIVE » 1991 » TOAPLAN

Today, Toaplan's *Zero Wing* is perhaps most famous for its "All your base are belong to us" meme, which first began circulating in the earlier Noughties. Whilst it's nice to see *Zero Wing*'s reputation cemented in videogame culture in such a memorable way, it's perhaps doing the game a disservice as there is far more to Toaplan's game than poorly translated cutscenes.

Mechanically, *Zero Wing* on the Mega Drive plays just like its arcade brother, so gameplay largely focusses around your ship's Seizer Beam. This useful piece of hi-tech weaponry allows you to either grab nearby enemies to use as handy shields, or fling them towards other ships. It's a neat mechanic that adds a surprising amount of strategy to the gameplay. In an additional nice touch, certain heavier ships will also cause your craft to lose altitude as well while you're carrying them.

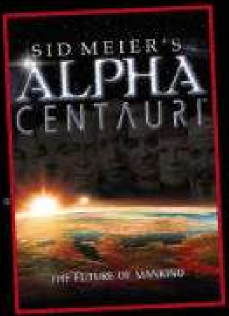
As useful as the Seizer Beam is, it's not the only weapon you have at your disposal as your craft can access homing missiles, lasers and cannon fire by grabbing the appropriate green, blue and red power-ups. Grab different-coloured icons to switch between weapons or simply nab the same colour to enhance that weapon's firepower – you can even grab a bomb to chuck at enemies as well. Like the Seizer Beam, the three weapons are carefully balanced and the clever level design means you'll often want to switch between them to gain the best possible advantage.

Originally released in 1991, *Zero Wing* on Mega Drive is very close to its arcade parent and while it loses out aesthetically, the game's level design and tremendous boss fights all remain intact. I spent hours playing it as a youngster and like *Tatsujin*, *Kyukyoku Tiger* and *Hellfire* before it, it convinced me that I'd made the perfect choice backing Sega's console at the time. *


1 TOP (EASY) ROUND1
1 123500 STAGE2

THE MAKING OF

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI



IN THE KNOW

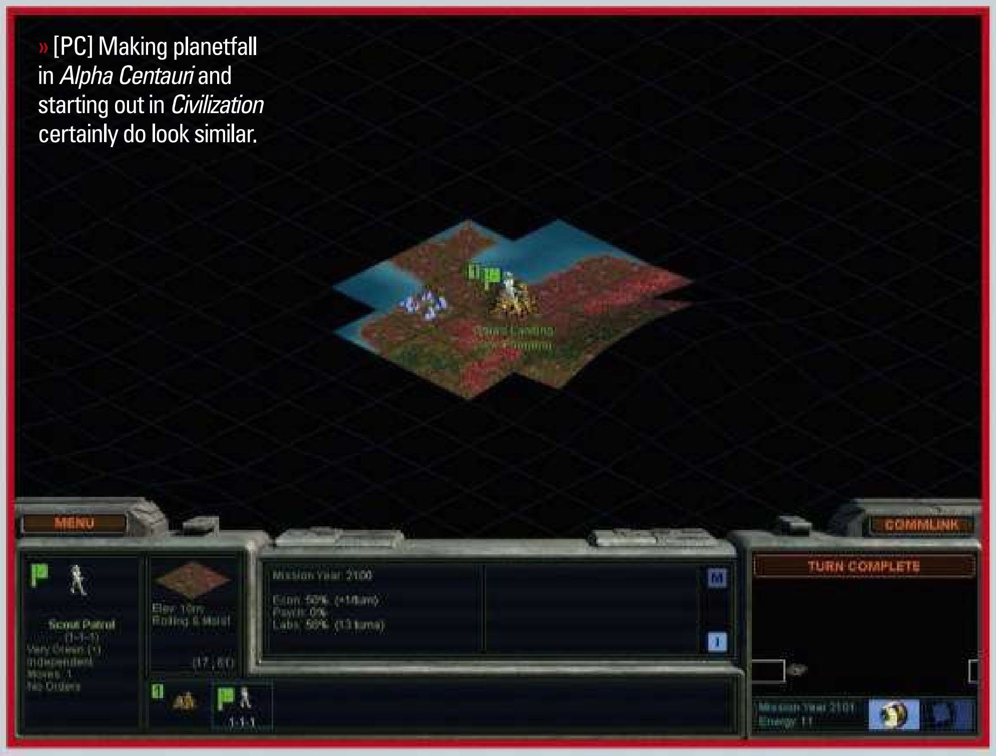
- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** FIRAXIS GAMES
- » **RELEASED:** 1999
- » **PLATFORM:** PC
- » **GENRE:** STRATEGY

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MANKIND SETS SAIL INTO THE STARS TO COLONISE NEW WORLDS? RETRO GAMER EXPLORES THE CREATION OF ALPHA CENTAURI, THE STORY OF LIFE AFTER CIVILIZATION AND HOW IT HELPED TO GIVE BIRTH TO FIRAXIS GAMES

WORDS BY ADAM BARNES

» Jason Coleman previously worked on *Civilization II* before moving over to Firaxis Games and *Alpha Centauri*. Like Tim Train, he's one of the founders of Big Huge Games.

» Tim Train was a co-designer and part-time producer on *Alpha Centauri*. He's currently working at Big Huge Games as vice president of operations and development.



» [PC] Making planetfall in *Alpha Centauri* and starting out in *Civilization* certainly do look similar.

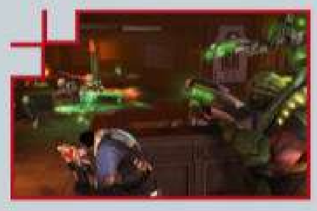
For reasons that are likely obvious, when anyone thinks of MicroProse, of Firaxis Games and of any game tagged Sid Meier's, the first thought is almost always *Civilization*. The reason is clear: it was a standout title that gave birth to its own breed of strategy game, and one that has been a retaining part of the games industry since its initial birth. Yet while it is true that *Alpha Centauri* couldn't exist if it wasn't for Sid Meier's earlier work on *Civilization*, the story behind its creation is so much more than '*Civilization* in space'.

The important thing to remember first is the timeline. Sid Meier, Brian Reynolds and Jeff Briggs left the sinking ship that was MicroProse and formed Firaxis Games in May of 1996, with a goal to leave behind the mess of manufacturing and distribution and instead focus solely on designing great games. While the studio got up and running, it would need to start making some games, and so Sid and Brian individually went away to prototype their ideas.

"I developed the underlying code systems to support both," recalls Jason Coleman, who had worked previously on *Civilization II* and others over at MicroProse before joining the newly formed Firaxis team. "As I recall, Brian started work on what became *Alpha Centauri* right away, while Sid had a few prototypes going before settling on *Gettysburg*. We didn't have an office at first and no substantive internet for large file storage at the time, and we'd shuttle code around using Jazz drives. We also didn't use any source control at first so, for a period of time, I'd hand merge all of our changes each morning."

While *Gettysburg* would go on to be the first game released by Firaxis, with essentially two teams working in conjunction there was space for a second in the form of Brian Reynolds' *Alpha Centauri* team. "At a business level, there was the cold hard reality that Firaxis did not (yet) have the rights to the *Civilization* IP," says Tim Train, who was a co-designer and part-time producer on *Alpha Centauri*. "But at a creative level, we'd spent two entire *Civilization* games sending spaceships to Alpha Centauri, and we were excited to finally tell the story of what happened once those colonists had blasted off from Earth.

"Brian is an avid sci-fi reader, and could also bring his interest in philosophy to the table with an emphasis on deeper societal questions that could be posed in a future-facing game." Brian, in fact, had studied philosophy at university before he got his job



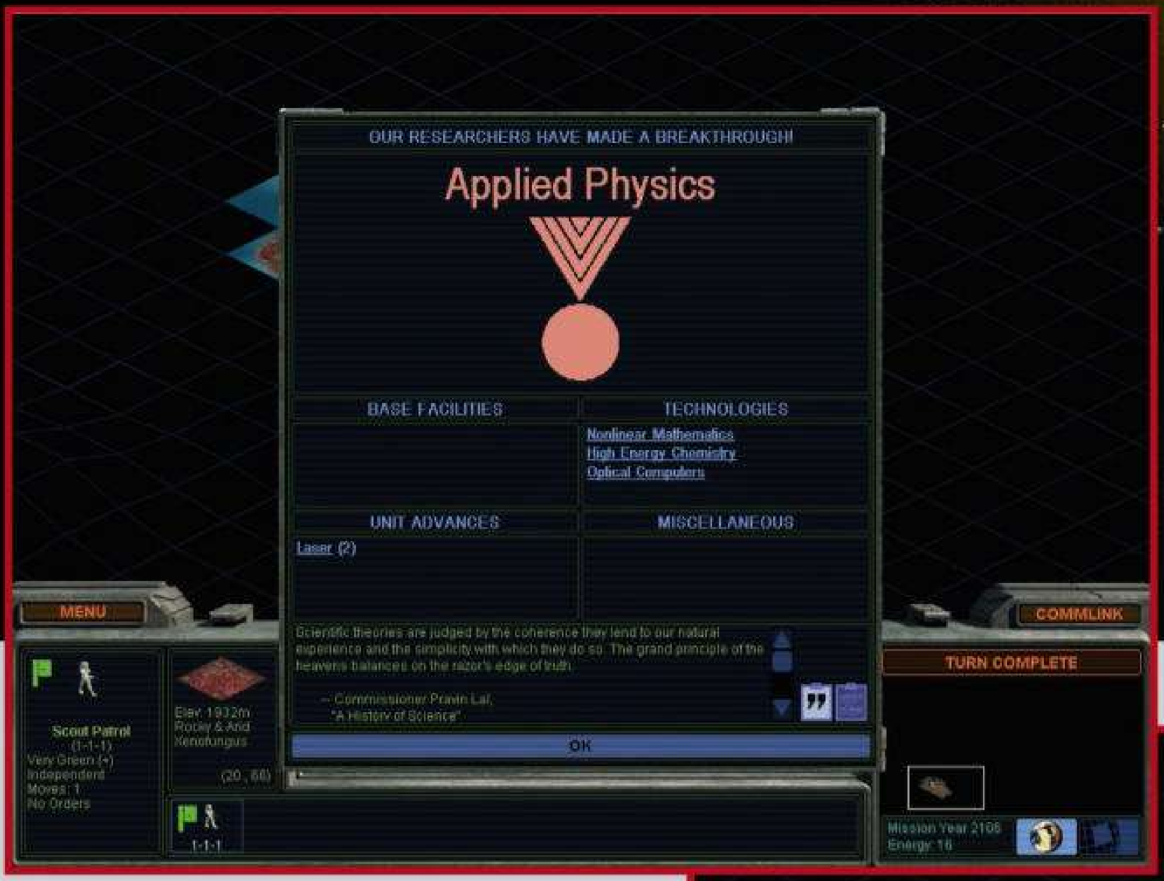
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG!
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1997

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION III
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 2001

XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 2012

> "WE DIDN'T HAVE AN OFFICE AT FIRST AND NO SUBSTANTIVE INTERNET FOR LARGE FILE STORAGE AT THE TIME"
> **JASON COLEMAN**


OUR RESEARCHERS HAVE MADE A BREAKTHROUGH!

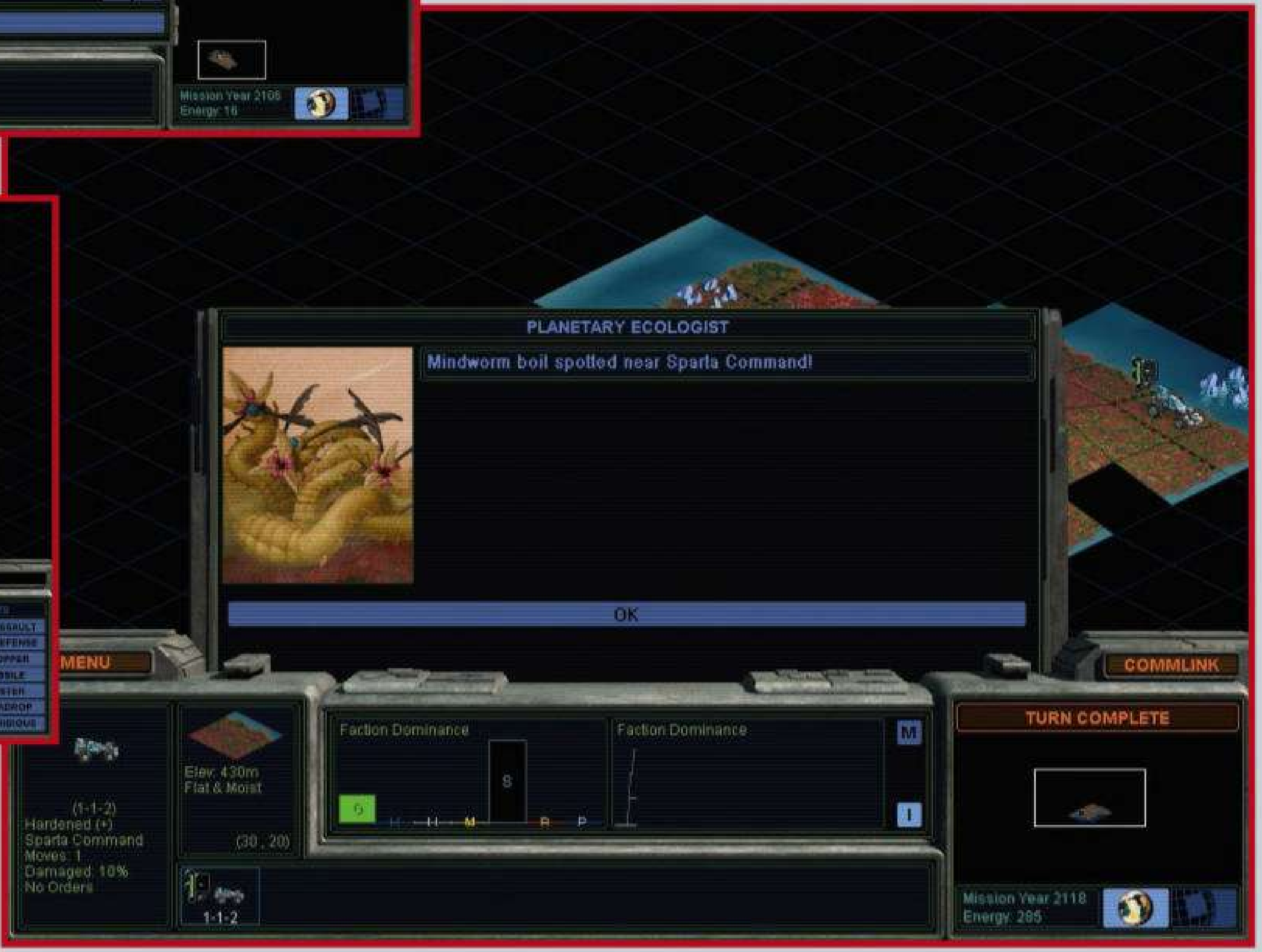
Applied Physics

Scientific theories are judged by the coherence they lend to our natural experience and the simplicity with which they do so. The grand principle of the heavens balances on the razor's edge of truth.

-- Commissioner Pravin Lal, "A History of Science"

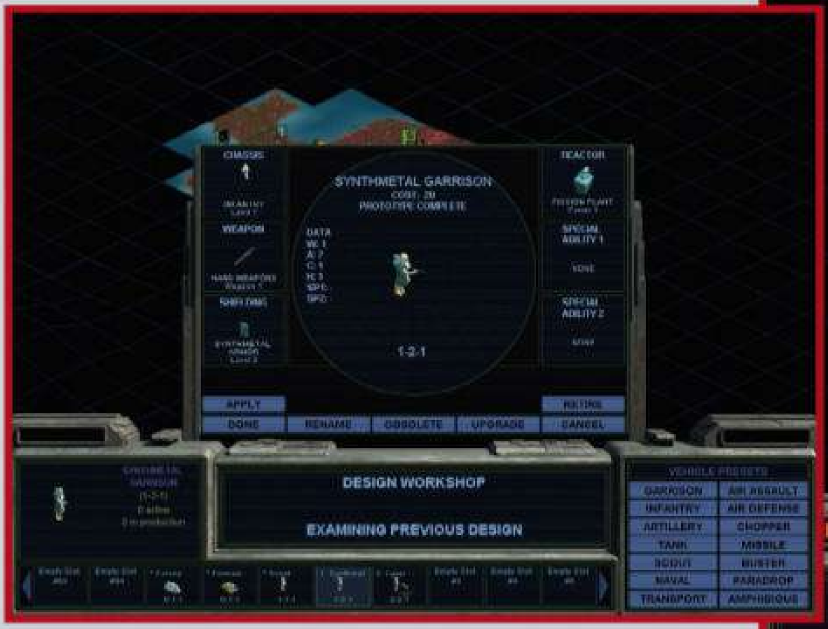
BASE FACILITIES
TECHNOLOGIES
Nonlinear Mathematics
High Energy Chemistry
Optical Computers
UNIT ADVANCES
Laser (2)
MISCELLANEOUS
OK
MENU
COMMLINK
TURN COMPLETE
Scout Patrol
(1-1-1)
Very Green (+)
Independent
Moves: 1
No Orders
Elev: 1932m
Rocky & Arid
Xenofungus
(20, 66)
1-1-1
Mission Year 2106
Energy: 16

» [[PC] *Alpha Centauri* was built with plausible science in mind… but only if you ignore the Mind Worms…


PLANETARY ECOLOGIST

Mindworm boil spotted near Sparta Command!

OK
MENU
COMMLINK
TURN COMPLETE
(1-1-2)
Hardened (+)
Sparta Command
Moves: 1
Damaged: 10%
No Orders
Elev: 430m
Flat & Moist
(30, 20)
Faction Dominance
Faction Dominance
1-1-2
Mission Year 2118
Energy: 285

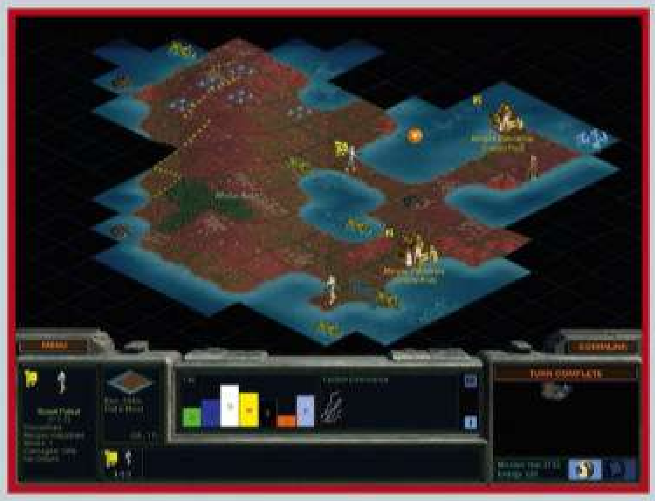


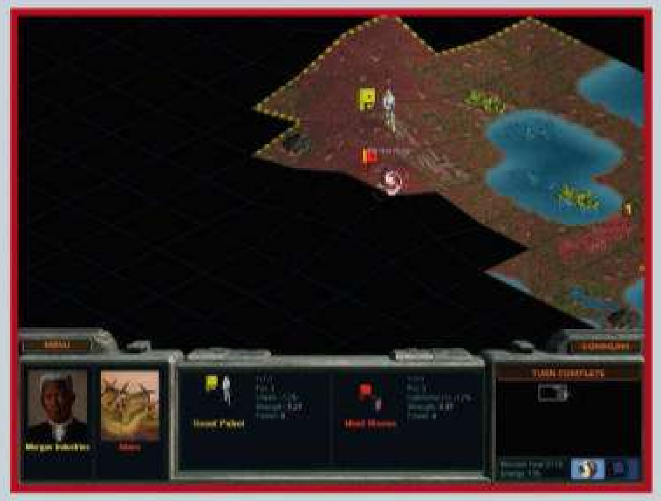
CHASSIS
WEAPON
SYNTHMETAL GARRISON
REACTOR
SPECIAL ABILITY 1
SPECIAL ABILITY 2
1-2-1
APPLY
DONE
RENAME
OBSOLETE
UPGRADE
RETIRE
CANCEL
DESIGN WORKSHOP
EXAMINING PREVIOUS DESIGN
VEHICLE PRESETS
GARRISON
AIR ASSAULT
INFANTRY
AIR DEFENSE
ARTILLERY
CHOPPER
TANK
MISSILE
SCOUT
MUSTER
NAVAL
PARADROP
TRANSPORT
AMPHIBIOUS

at MicroProse; *Alpha Centauri* was freed of the *Civilization*'s historical restrictions, meaning there was scope for a deeper exploration of topics such as planetary colonisation and how the human race might handle that.

"This was the golden age of game design, where 'build a game you love to play, and you'll probably find an audience for it' was the dominant business model," explains Tim. "We all loved the depth, richness, and replayability of turn-based strategy, and so rather than start from some top-level goals, we just built a quick engine to prototype core gameplay in the 4X model, and started to play the game every day."

From the earliest prototype, the team would have regular play sessions where they'd work out what elements were fun, what weren't, and then quickly iterate on those learnings while also cramming in new stuff just for additional experiments. "Brian and Jason were often coding up new systems by the


» [PC] The UI was crammed with tidbits of info and decorative elements to make it feel like a sci-fi computer.


» [PC] Combat was more numbers driven than any *Civilization* game, which added to the strategic depth.

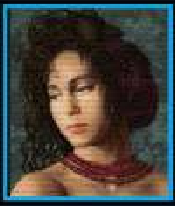
CHOOSE YOUR FACTION

IT'S GOOD TO KNOW WHO YOU'LL BE DECLARING WAR ON…

THE LORD'S BELIEVERS

■ An inability to research anything for the early game is a disadvantage for the Believers, but this is a faction that is better suited to early game military offensives so that they can strong-arm their way to the top for when it's time to take science seriously. And that +25% when attacking is deadly.

GAIA'S STEPDAUGHTERS

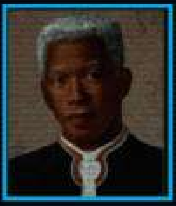


■ The Gaians' main advantage is that they can expand quite easily due to the boost in nutrients they get. This ability spread out far and wide is incredibly useful, making them one of the strongest factions in the game – made all the better with their ability to capture Mind Worms early on.

HUMAN HIVE

■ This is the game's communism analogue and as such benefits from enhanced industry, while the extra growth means it can expand quickly too. That industry advantage is important since it means the Hive is capable of a huge army or of a well-built empire, but to the detriment of its economy.

MORGAN INDUSTRIES

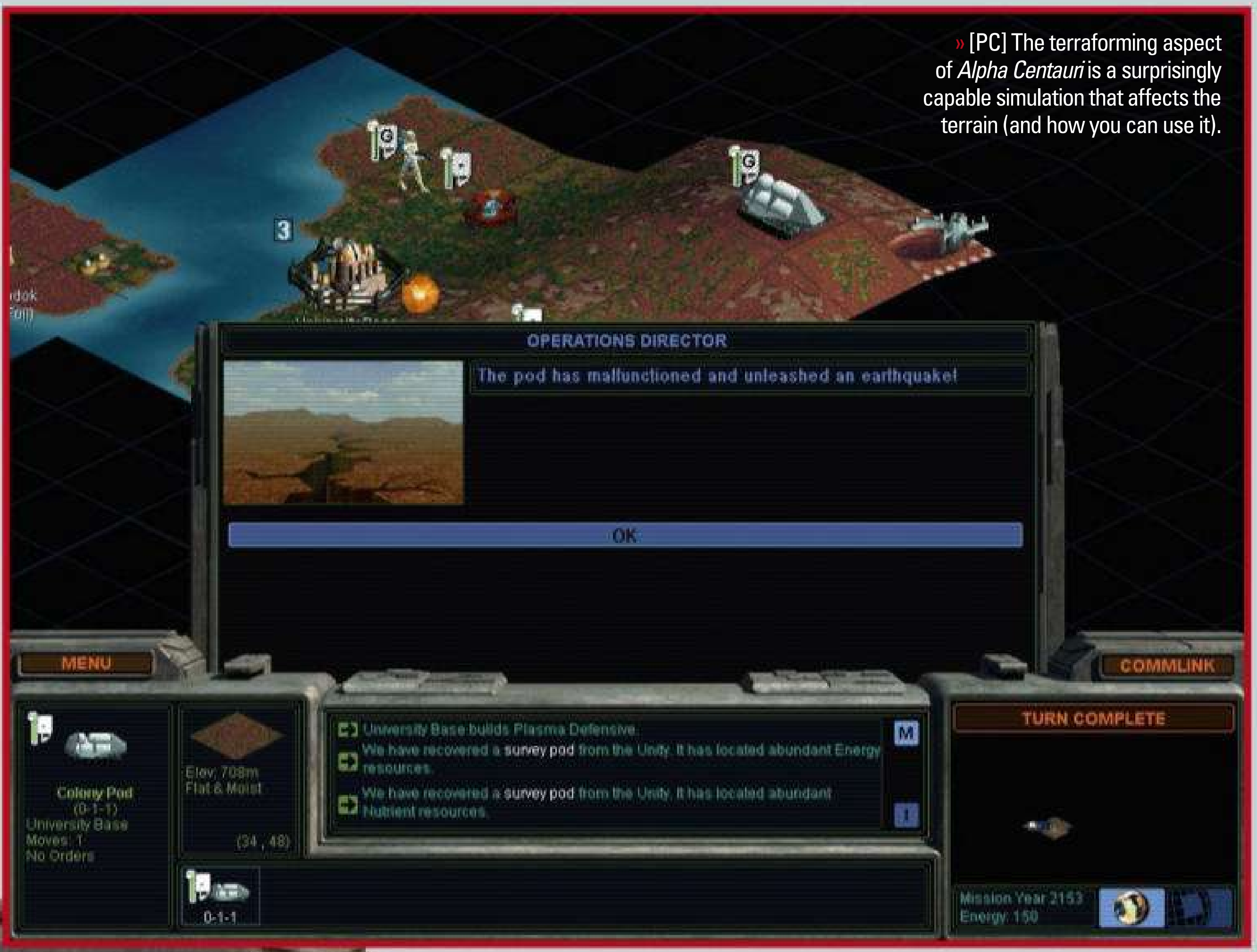


■ This faction is the 'sci-fi corporate entity' that puts cash before people. Despite the advantage and the bonus 100 credits to start with, Morgan Industries is one of the few underwhelming factions in *Alpha Centauri*. You'll afford more things, but you'll need to be picky about how you play.

next play session," says Tim, recalling how this fast-paced approach to development helps to refine a game over the course of its development. "On a future development team, we'd call this kind of engineering 'JSI/RSO Certified', for 'Jam Shit In, Rip Shit Out' – a specific skill set that prioritises fast iteration, ideal for systems-driven strategy games. Play the game every day, make it more fun the next day, lather, rinse, repeat, and after a couple of years you've got a great game."

On the technical side, Jason was in charge of the engine that powered *Alpha Centauri*, meaning things like input and output, graphics rendering, UI system and the like. "This was all built from scratch; we didn't have access to any of our previous work from MicroProse," he says, adding that since it was the early days of Firaxis he was also, "Acting as IT and tech support for the company."

Visually, *Alpha Centauri* held a candle to its preceding *Civilization* games, if not for the obvious benefit that would come from fans being able to compare the two, then for the standardisation that the genre had adopted since the release of *Civilization II*. Even so, having to build everything from scratch was an opportunity to do new things, and the engine that Jason and the team at Firaxis built allowed for undulating terrain, 3D unit models and even a simulation powering the terraforming feature of the game. "The biggest challenge I recall involved the units," says Jason. "Having customisable units was important to Brian and our solution (pre-reliable hardware accelerated 3D) was to use a voxel rendering system." Jason adds that this brought with it "all kinds of challenges", with the rendering looking muddy and the performance of the game taking a hit. "The core algorithm was all in assembly and we spent a bunch of time back and forth with some Electronic Arts engineers to make it workable. This ended up including some self-modifying code where there would be one pass to set constants for jump points in the code so we could save on registers while looping. I'm actually surprised that any of that still works on modern CPUs."



The pod has malfunctioned and unleashed an earthquake!

University Base builds Plasma Defensive.

We have recovered a survey pod from the Unity. It has located abundant Energy resources.

We have recovered a survey pod from the Unity. It has located abundant Nutrient resources.

» [PC] The terraforming aspect of *Alpha Centauri* is a surprisingly capable simulation that affects the terrain (and how you can use it).

It was important for the team that this was seen as something new, Firaxis might have had the big-name clout behind many of its team members coming over from MicroProse, but it still needed to prove it had the goods – without actually having the goods, such as *Civilization*. In that sense, *Alpha Centauri* did have a certain need to pull players in from *Civilization*, but it very much had to be its own game in its own right if Firaxis was going to succeed without Sid Meier's biggest creation behind it. "We intentionally tried to straddle the line there," says Tim. "Our internal and external pitch for the game was 'The Spiritual Successor to *Civilization*', and so we very much viewed it as an unofficial sequel. One key Sid Meier design principle is that sequels should be a mix of one-third new, one-third improvements, and one-third retained from the previous game, and I think *Alpha Centauri* hewed pretty closely to that ratio."

But that wasn't the only design approach that carried over from earlier games through to

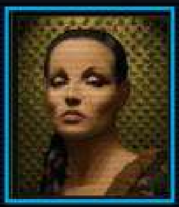
PEACEKEEPING FORCES

There's no distinct strategy guiding the Forces, which makes them the most flexible faction in the game. Particularly interesting is the fact that you'll get double votes to be elected Planetary Governor and the benefits that come with it, with the bonus to talent means Golden Ages aplenty.

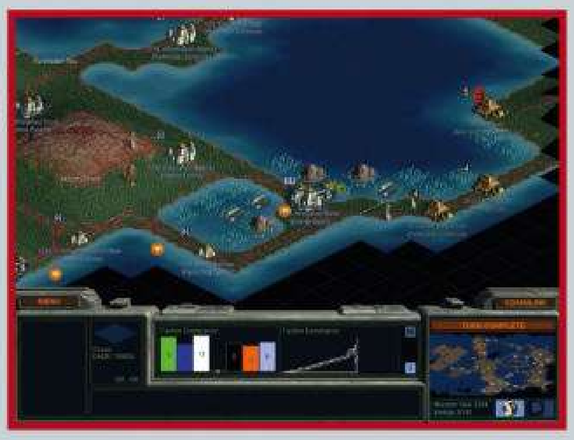
UNIVERSITY OF PLANET

For those who like to play the tech race, UOP gives a huge boost to scientific research for an unmatched scientific advantage as the game progresses. You get a free starting tech, +2 to research and a free Network Node (ie 50% boost to all science resources) in every base: what's not to love.

SPARTAN FEDERATION



Given the name, it's perhaps no surprise that this faction is driven towards a militaristic style of play. With a very high morale and a bonus to a police state faction, playing the Spartans forces you down the route of building a massive army – even if their industry is slower than most.



» [PC] The sci-fi nature of the game allowed *Alpha Centauri* to make better use of the open expanses of water than *Civ* ever could.

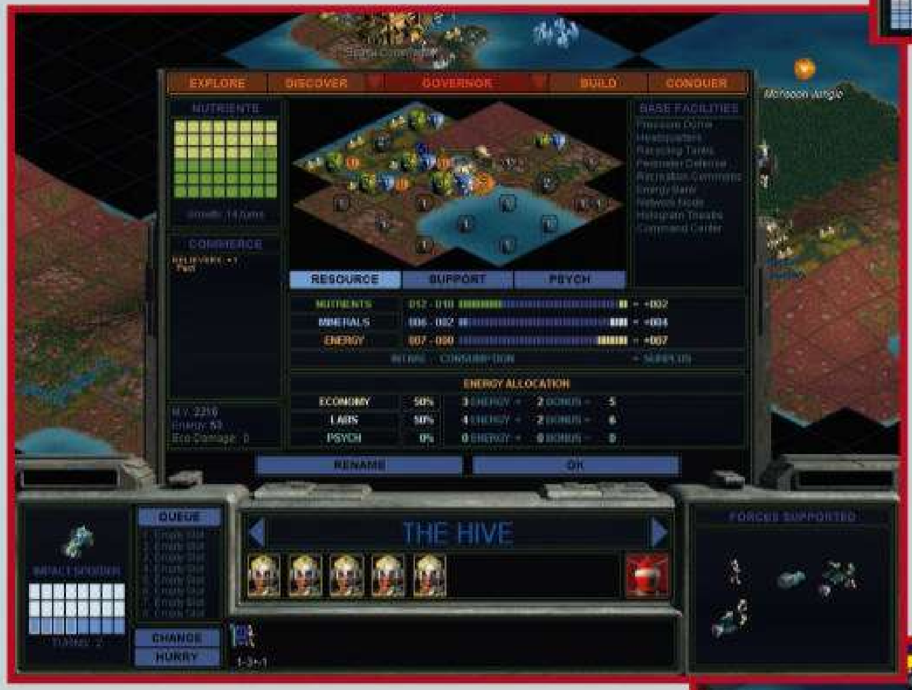
ZARYA-SUNRISE

Firaxis and *Alpha Centauri*. How *Civilization* and its sequel had been designed in some ways also impacted the decision-making process behind *Alpha Centauri*. Tim explains, "Another Sid Meier design principle is 'a game is a series of interesting decisions'. At a systemic level, the *Civilization* model does a great job of presenting players with agonising trade offs and choices – the hallmark of all great turn-based strategy games. So above all, we really wanted to retain that framework." Tim suggests that it is important that there should never be one singular 'best' route through the game, or that any specific technology, faction or unit should stand out as 'the best'. "You might want to play as a strict pacifist, chasing Transcendence," says Tim, "but when the Spartans show up on your door on turn three with laser tanks popped from Monoliths, you know it's going to come to blows sooner rather than later."

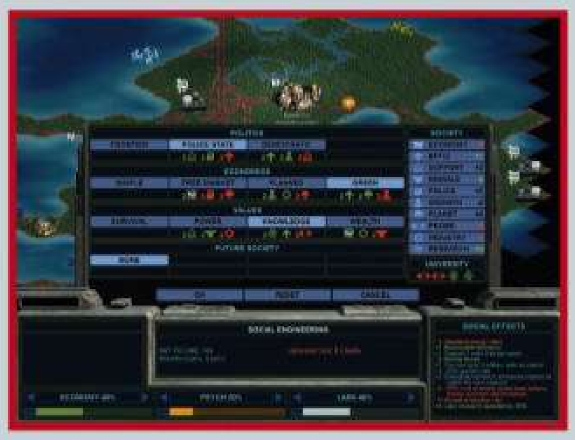
This was why the factions of the game were designed to be so distinct from one another. Later *Civilization* games would adopt a stylistic approach to how any given empire should play, but it was *Alpha Centauri* that first introduced the idea that players could make a playstyle choice before the game even begins. "The sci-fi setting obviously allows you access to fun new technological concepts," says Tim, "but at a deeper level, the exploration of the nature of society and humanity could be much richer when you imagine what *might* happen, as opposed to what *did* happen."

Because of its sci-fi setting, *Alpha Centauri* was more able to let players imagine themselves as leaders of a colony: rather than recreating the past, *Alpha Centauri* instead asked players how they would take command of the future. But this also opened up areas for the narrative side of the game in a way that *Civilization* with its make-believe retelling of real-world history simply couldn't. "Multimedia producer Mike Ely developed a fully realised backstory for the faction leaders," explains Tim, "eventually authoring three books set in the *Alpha Centauri* universe, in addition to his work creating all the Special Project Movies. The non-linear story of the factions, and of Planet more broadly, was revealed through snippets of fragmented narrative drops that could come in different orders depending on your path through each game." Fun fact: this disparate approach to an unravelling narrative was even an inspiration for Ken Levine when creating the tape recordings in *BioShock*.

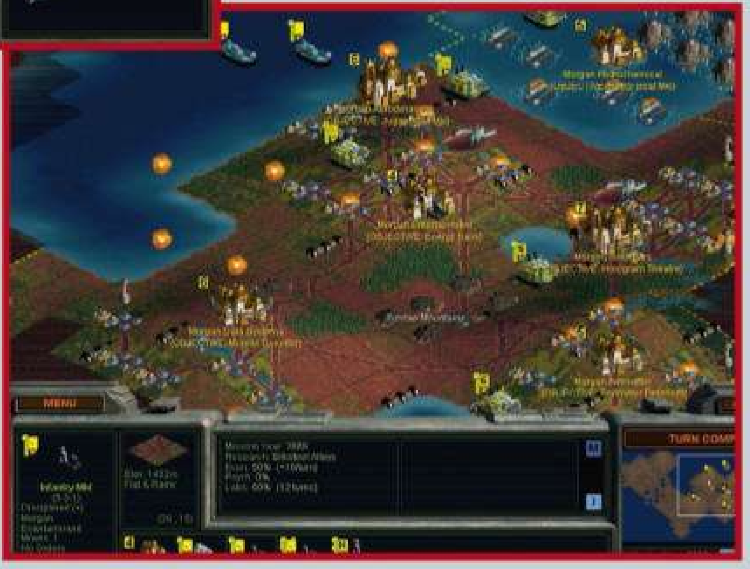
To match that sci-fi setting, Jeff Briggs – one of the three Firaxis cofounders and the composer for *Alpha Centauri* – had felt a need for a more futuristic interface, which was throughout its development more in line with Windows in the ▶



» [PC] Nineties PC games would definitely benefit from the learnings the last decade of games have learnt about user interface…



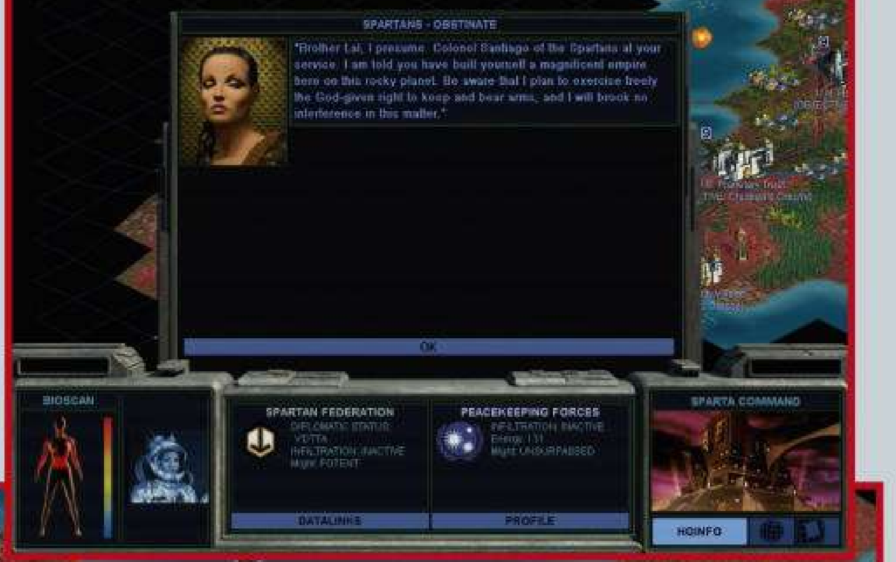
» [PC] The Social Engineering system allowed players to design their play style through policies they would set for their faction.



» [PC] It's testament to the balancing of the game that no one faction is more capable than another… despite what internet commenters said at the time.

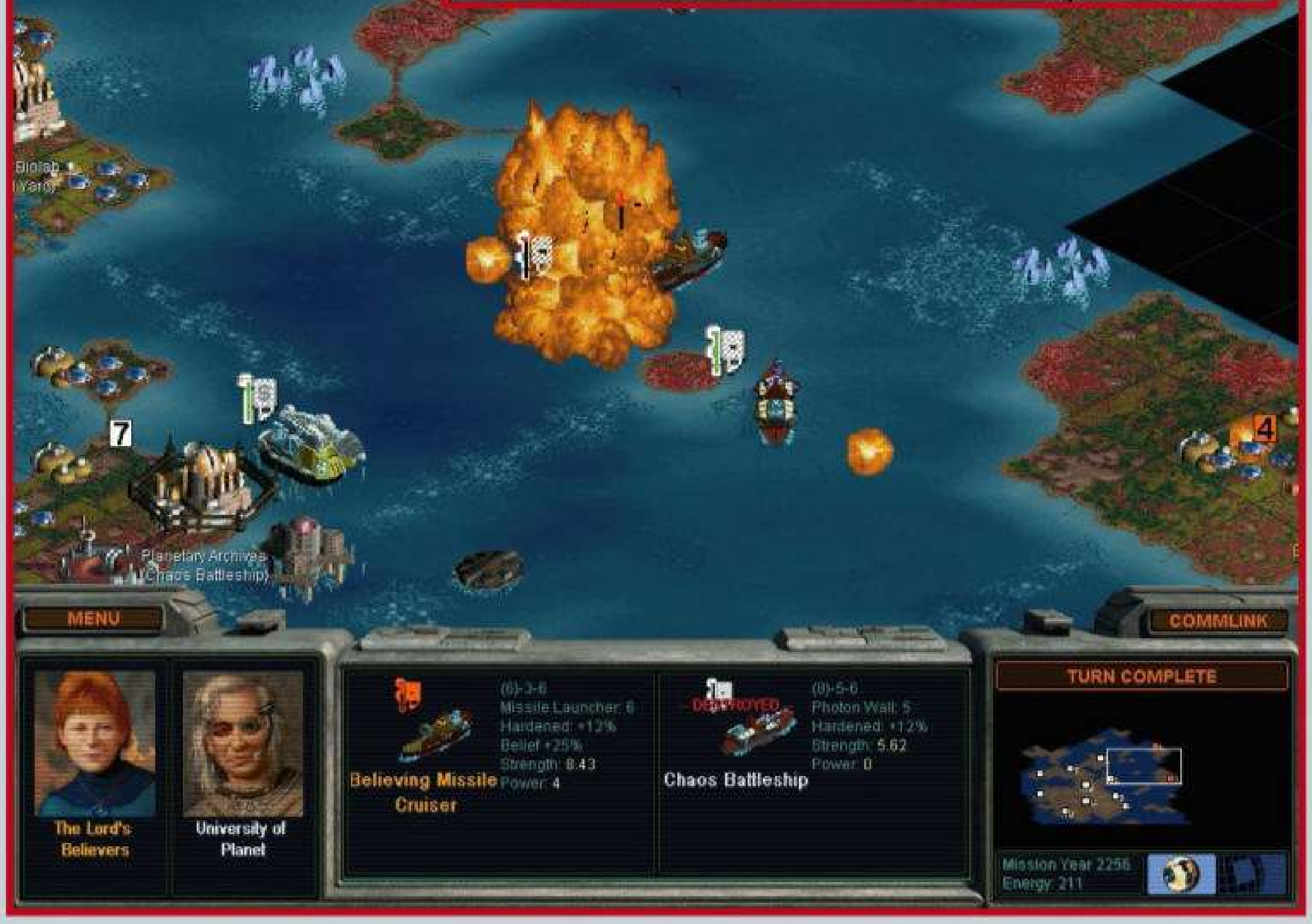
> "THE SCI-FI SETTING OBVIOUSLY ALLOWS YOU ACCESS TO FUN NEW TECHNOLOGICAL CONCEPTS"
> **TIM TRAIN**

» [PC] Sure, *Alpha Centauri*'s AI was impressive, but the text interactions were also way more rich and believable than in *Civilization*.



SPARTANS - OBSTINATE

"Brother Lal, I presume. Colonel Santiago of the Spartans at your service. I am told you have built yourself a magnificent empire here on this rocky planet. Be aware that I plan to exercise freely the God-given right to keep and bear arms, and I will brook no interference in this matter."



» [PC] Wars feel more important in *Alpha Centauri* than in *Civilization*, but they're impossible to avoid so better to prepare…

Nineties. "The original UI was very boxy, opaque and with big caption bars," says Jason, adding that, "It didn't feel particularly sci-fi in any way." According to Jason, Jeff asked for a UI revisit while Brian was away on vacation for a couple of weeks, "That was kind of an unusual thing to do… let the guy have a vacation without worrying that his game is gonna get scrambled! Anyway, I worked on some UI system enhancements and implemented a UI refresh headed by artist Dave Inscore. On his return, Brian accepted the idea and that's pretty much the UI style that we shipped with." Jason adds that it was Dave's work at this point that would ultimately lead to him being made one of the partners alongside Tim and Brian when they went on to create Big Huge Games.

In the end, *Alpha Centauri* took two-and-a-half years to develop, a long process (especially for the time) of constant testing, tweaking and improving. The team let its design evolve organically in keeping with the newly formed Firaxis attitude towards development, and through that the game became more and more refined. Even by the end of development, mere days away from sending the title out into the world, new additions were getting implemented. "Literally days before we were scheduled to ship, Brian decided that we needed three entirely new victory conditions in the game, beyond just a straight military conquest victory," recalls Tim. "This was in the early internet days when patching a game was still a major hassle, and so if you were going to

MASTERING ALPHA CENTAURI

HOW YOU CAN CLAIM PLANET AS YOUR OWN

UNITY PODS

Much like the tribal villages of *Civilization*, *Alpha Centauri*'s Unity Pods are little treasure troves dotted throughout a map and up for grabs from the moment you make planetfall. Though the rewards are random, any advantage early on will be appreciated – focus on these from the start!

TERRAFORMING

Being able to shape Planet to your needs is a complex and rich system. It can be overwhelming at first, but it's important to consider if you want long-term success in *Alpha Centauri*. Just remember that too much terraforming can have disastrous effects, even potentially causing the polar ice caps to melt, flooding everyone…

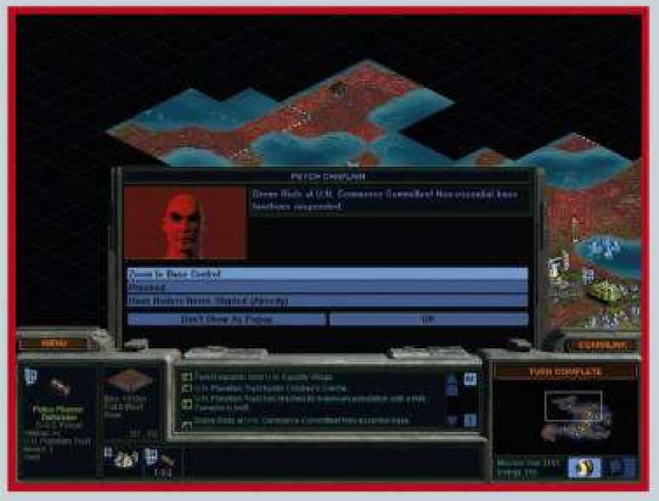
MONOLITHS

On top of the Unity Pods are the Monoliths, which are incredibly important structures to find within the world. They'll provide 2/2/2 resources for any city, allow you to fully heal any unit and even allow you to promote one unit once. He who controls the Monoliths, controls Planet.

get a feature in, you had to do it before launch. I remember kicking up something of a fuss about this, but we all tested it as thoroughly as we could and started burning the gold masters."

And even then the last final hurdle of getting those masters sent away would prove to be a challenge all by itself. "Partly due to last-minute design changes and partly due to the standard insanity of tying off all your loose ends, we were still burning the final discs at the 5pm close of FedEx hours near our offices just north of Baltimore, MD." says Tim, who adds that the persistent snow piling up throughout the day which ultimately escalated into a severe storm. "Someone had to get in the car and drive them to the FedEx courier location at Baltimore-Washington International Airport, at night, with several inches of snow on the roads… just the job for this newfangled 'producer' role," laughs Tim, who remembers "white-knuckling" his 1995 Saturn through the snow to get the masters hand-delivered to FedEx on time. "I made it with ten minutes to spare. We all took the next week off and awaited the reviews."

The efforts all paid off, however. *Alpha Centauri* released on Windows PCs in February 1999, with Mac following a year later to a great deal of positive press, high review scores and even a few Game Of The Year awards. To this day it is cited as one of the all-time great strategy games, even alongside its spiritual predecessor *Civilization II*. "We knew that history as a theme has a broad appeal and an accessibility that's hard to replicate in a sci-fi title," says Tim. "You never need to explain to someone why Gunpowder is important in *Civ*, but what is Superstring Theory and what is it good for? That's harder to describe. So we expected to have a less broad audience than *Civilization*, particularly given the juggernaut that *Civ II* had become."



» [PC] Drone riots are rebellions caused by poor city planning, but can be handled by 'nerve stapling' – an atrocity that will cause trade sanctions from other factions.

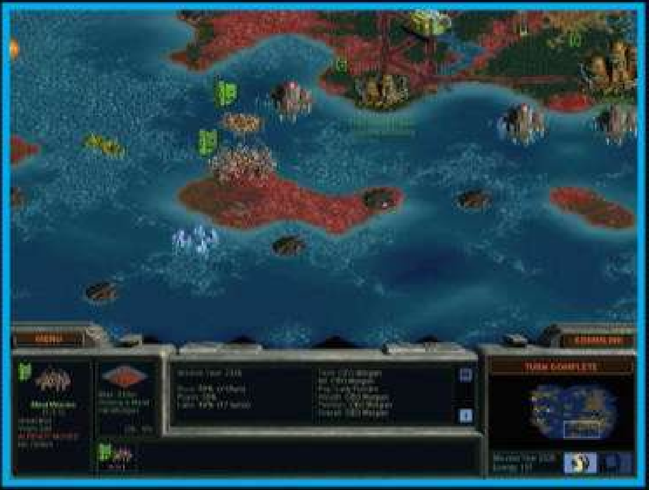
With some smart determination from EA's Bing Gordon, who Tim describes as *Alpha Centauri*'s, "Patron of our partnership with Electronic Arts," the game went on to achieve an impressive one million in sales. "Bing is a marketing genius, and I remember him making the case for a demo," explains Tim, which helped build up some hype in the first post-MicroProse project from the team that made *Civilization II*. It might swap rewriting history for a sci-fi look at the future, but *Alpha Centauri* managed to do exactly what it set out to do: prove that Firaxis Games didn't need to rest on the laurels of *Civilization* to succeed. *

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

THE EXPANSION PACK THAT ADDED IN ALIENS…

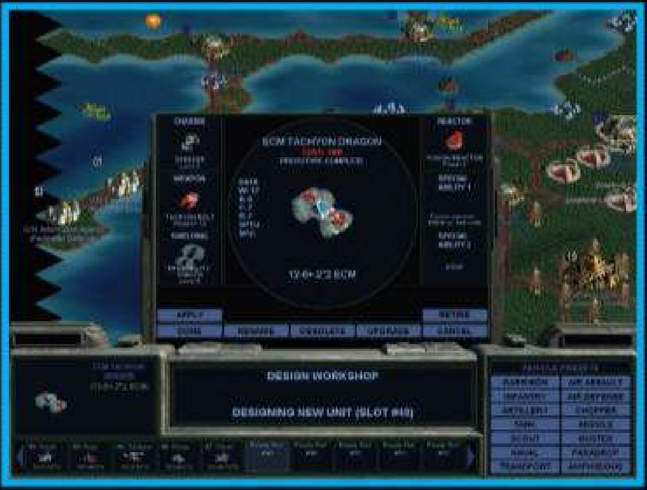
■ Once it was clear that *Alpha Centauri* was a success, an inevitable expansion pack was set for development. "Expansions are a great opportunity to tweak a base game in wacky ways," says Tim, who adds that with this one the team wanted to, "Push the boundary on asymmetric faction gameplay, so these new groups wouldn't just play as slight modifications on the original set." The result was *Alien Crossfire*, which added in two playable alien races (among other factions) that would be played completely different to the base game's factions.

After playing the base game solidly during development, Tim adds that the team "had a pretty good handle on what worked about the core mechanics of *Alpha Centauri*". Interestingly that broad and unspecific approach to the game's narrative was also a key part of its development. "A secret design objective was to insert the lyrics of Jim Jones into the backstory in *Alien Crossfire*," adds Tim. For three decades now, Brian, Jason, and I love to get together and play music, mostly folk tunes. We are all big fans of Bob Dylan's *Good As I Been To You* album of folk covers, which includes Jim Jones. I was excited to put a lyric snippet from the song as part of the Free Drones backstory."



MIND WORMS

■ While at first you'd consider Mind Worms to be the *Alpha Centauri* equivalent of the barbarians from *Civilization*, in fact they're a little more nuanced. However, if you aim to be harmonious with Planet rather than terraforming it to your will, you'll be able to enlist these psi-attack units into your own armies for free.

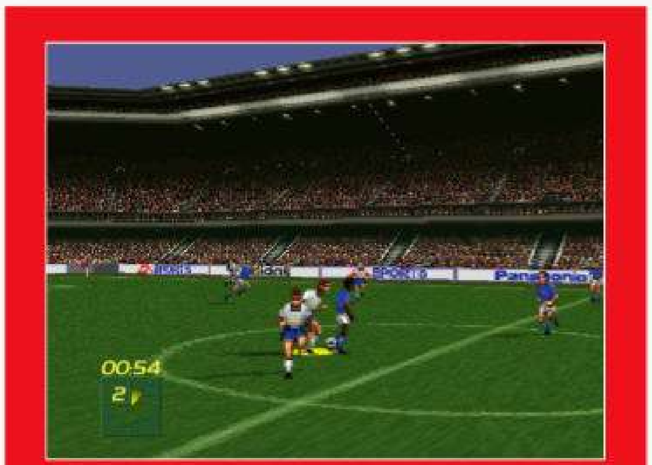


CUSTOM UNITS

■ Learning how to make the most of *Alpha Centauri*'s unit customisation feature will get you far. Finding that balance between the cost of the unit and what it offers your army is crucial, but it's equally important to do a 'stock check' from time to time to see if there are any units now obsolete or in need of tweaking or upgrading.

> "WE KNEW THAT HISTORY AS A THEME HAS A BROAD APPEAL AND AN ACCESSIBILITY THAT'S HARD TO REPLICATE IN A SCI-FI TITLE"
> **TIM TRAIN**

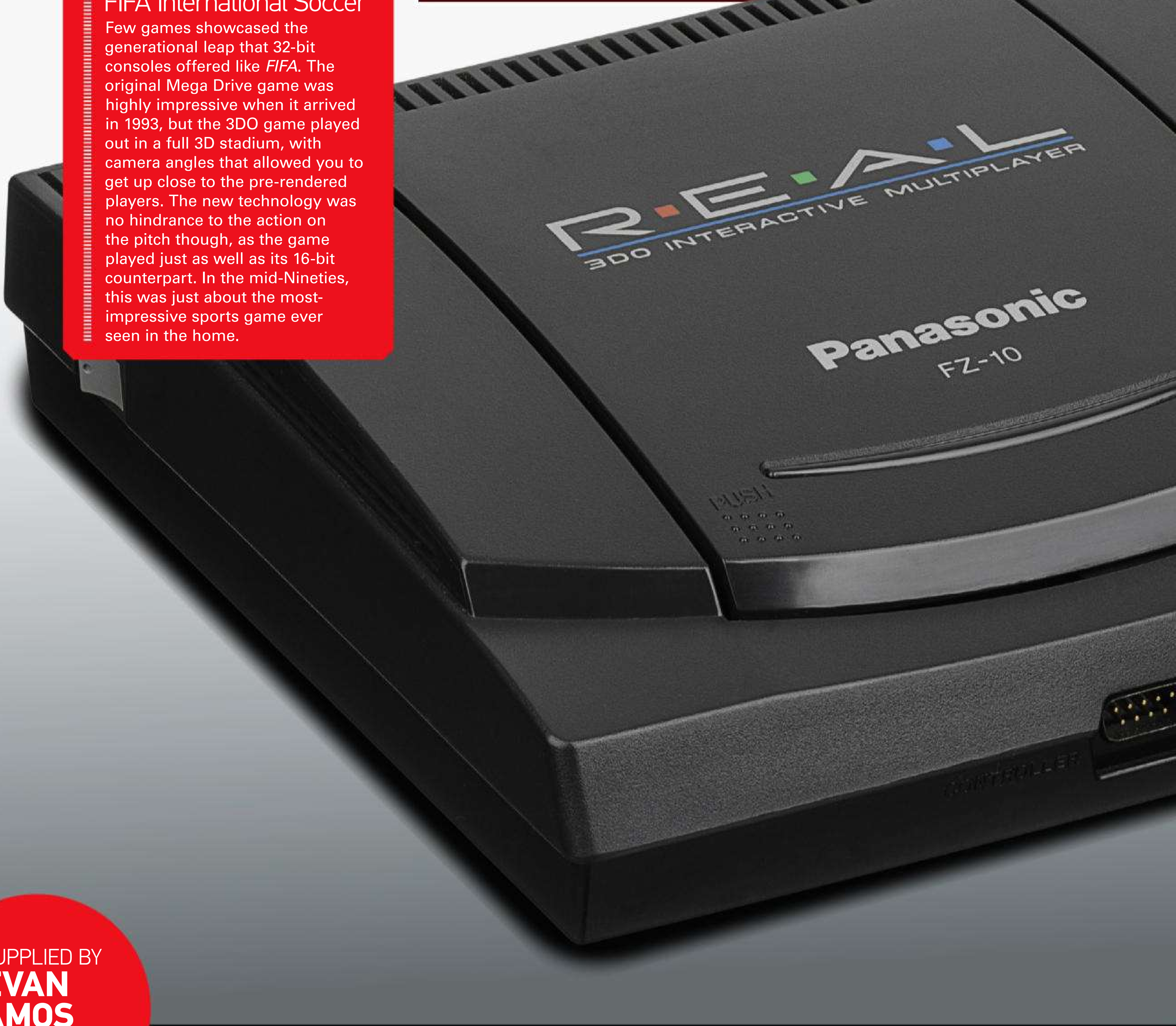
Hardware Heaven



ESSENTIAL GAME

FIFA International Soccer

Few games showcased the generational leap that 32-bit consoles offered like *FIFA*. The original Mega Drive game was highly impressive when it arrived in 1993, but the 3DO game played out in a full 3D stadium, with camera angles that allowed you to get up close to the pre-rendered players. The new technology was no hindrance to the action on the pitch though, as the game played just as well as its 16-bit counterpart. In the mid-Nineties, this was just about the most-impressive sports game ever seen in the home.



SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

3DO FZ-10

» **MANUFACTURER:** Panasonic » **YEAR:** 1994
» **COST:** £299.99 (launch), £190+ (today, boxed), £90+ (today, unboxed)

When Panasonic introduced the 3DO format to the world with its FZ-1 console, its clear technical advantages over existing consoles were overshadowed by its mighty price tag. Just one year later, the Japanese electronics giant responded with its new FZ-10 – a smaller, lighter and, most importantly, cheaper 3DO. Where the FZ-1 looked like a piece of stereo equipment, conveying Panasonic's aspirations of fitting the 3DO into your home entertainment system, the FZ-10 looks more like a traditional console, most notably in its use of a regular lid instead of a motorised tray for the CD-ROM drive.

The FZ-10 and new 3DO models from other manufacturers were the right products to introduce, but arrived as Sega and Sony introduced the Saturn and PlayStation, both of which had more developer support and better 3D capabilities. Game production continued until mid-1996, but the 3DO never really gained a foothold in the market. Although Panasonic purchased the next-generation M2 technology from the 3DO Company with the view to introducing a successor, it would ultimately abandon the highly competitive videogame market in July 1997. *

READY
ACCESS

3DO FZ-10 fact

■ Like other 3DO models, the 3DO FZ-10 only has one controller port. This is because each controller contains a port for an extra player to connect to.

PROCESSORS: 32-BIT ARM60 (12.5 MHZ)

RAM: 2MB MAIN, 1MB VIDEO

GRAPHICS: CUSTOM CHIPS CLIO AND MADAM (12.5 MHZ, 320X240 RESOLUTION, 24-BIT COLOUR PALETTE, FILL RATE 9-16 MILLION PIXELS PER SECOND)

AUDIO: CUSTOM DSP WITH 13 DIGITAL INPUT CHANNELS, CD AUDIO

STORAGE: 32KB BUILT-IN SRAM

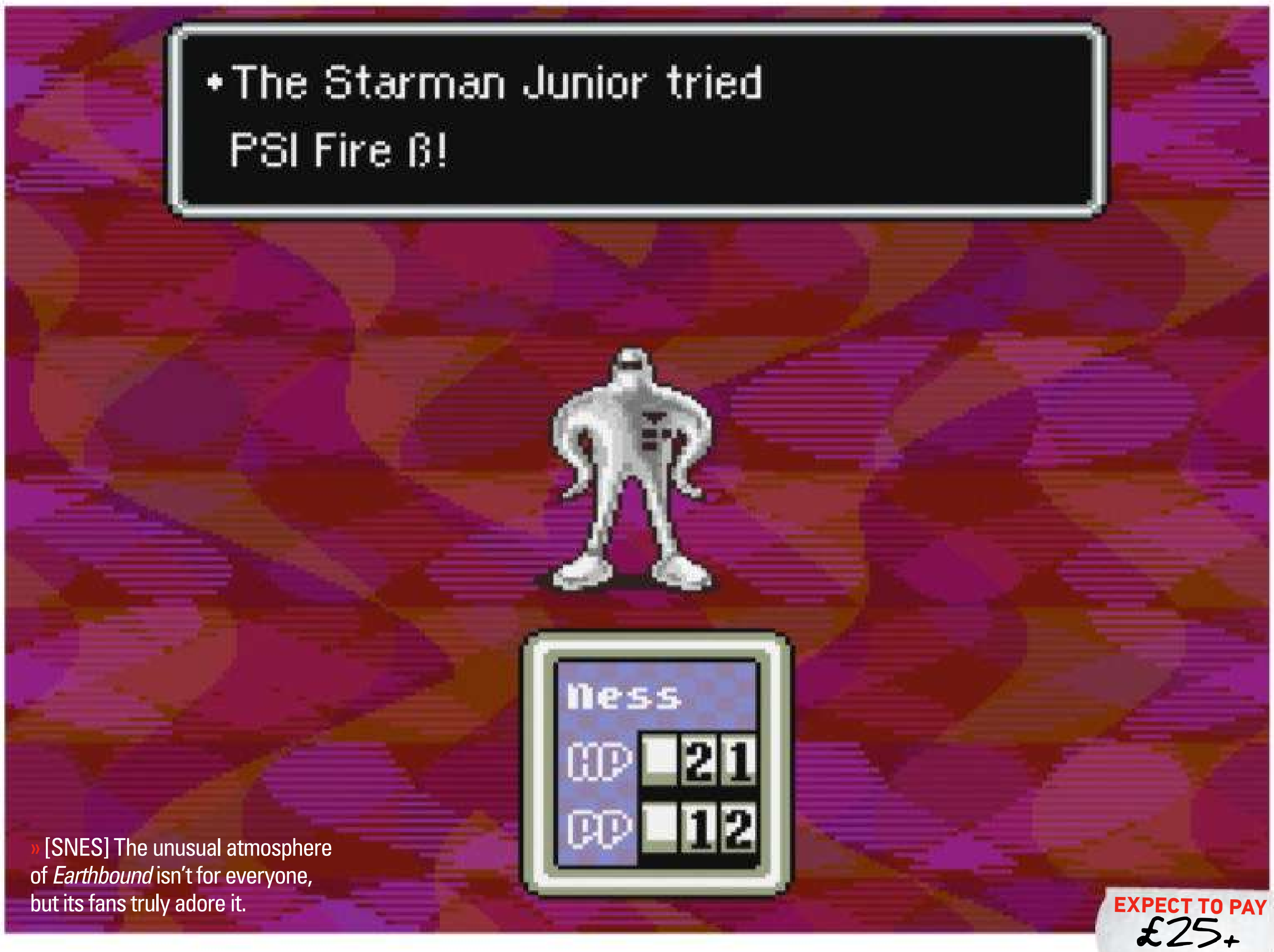
MEDIA: 650MB CD-ROM

SO YOU WANT TO COLLECT...

SNES GAMES

Nintendo's 16-bit system is one of the world's favourite consoles, and its games have shot up in value over the last couple of years, so it's a good time for us to take a look at how much some of its best games will cost you today

Words by Nick Thorpe



• The Starman Junior tried
PSI Fire β!

Ness
HP 21
PP 12

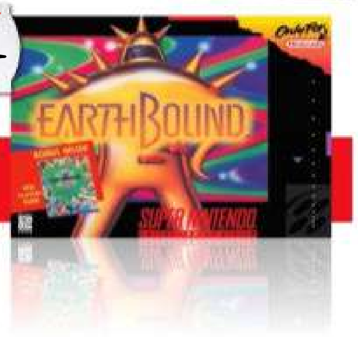
» [SNES] The unusual atmosphere of *Earthbound* isn't for everyone, but its fans truly adore it.

EXPECT TO PAY £25+ JAPAN

RAID YOUR SAVINGS

EARTHBOUND

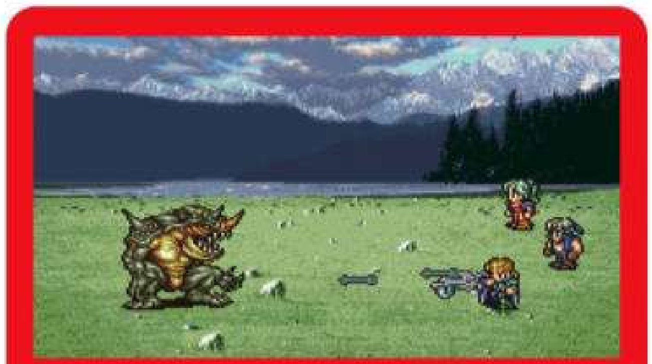
EXPECT TO PAY £1,600+ USA



DEVELOPER:	APE INC/HAL LABORATORY
RELEASE:	1994

■ Shigesato Itoi's cult classic is known for its oddball characters, its unsettling final boss and its relatively low sales in North America, with 140,000 copies sold. While it's not the rarest game, its lofty reputation and a devoted fan following both help to keep demand high, as does the fact that a complete package includes items like a scratch and sniff card which is often not present. *Earthbound*'s price has rocketed over the last couple of years, and it now has a combination of quality, notoriety and desirability that few other SNES games possess.

The Japanese version, titled *Mother 2*, is considerably cheaper. It's highly undesirable to anyone who can't read the language and like many Japanese RPGs of the era, it sold far better in its homeland. If you're not already a committed fan who has to have the original cartridge, we'd advise you to play the English version via Nintendo Switch Online or the SNES Classic Mini, both of which are much more affordable options.



REAL PRICEY GAMES

More costly RPGs for your SNES

Final Fantasy VI

■ Many swear by Square's final 16-bit entry in the *Final Fantasy* series as its best game overall, thanks to its decision to move away from strict fantasy and its memorable villain Kefka. The US version, named *Final Fantasy III*, comes with a map and poster. There are other, cheaper English versions of the game available on various platforms with some changes in content and localisation, which you may wish to consider before taking the plunge on this rather expensive cartridge.

Breath Of Fire II

■ If you've ever thought that you could solve most of your problems by simply becoming a dragon, Capcom's RPG might well be the game for you. A map insert was originally provided with the non-Japanese releases of this game, so be sure to make sure it's included. The localisation isn't amazing, so maybe learning Japanese is the best option for playing this one. There's also a Game Boy Advance version that makes a few changes, and that's cheaper but still a bit pricey.

» [SNES] This is how we remember *Rainbow Road* – short and unforgiving. Like life.

» [SNES] You don't get the feather in most later *Mario Karts*, which makes this one better.

EXPECT TO PAY £20+ JAPAN

TOP BANANA

SUPER MARIO KART

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
RELEASE: 1992

EXPECT TO PAY £40+ EUROPE/USA

■ It's crazy to think that Mario's most lucrative spin-off didn't start as a *Mario* game at all, but rather an attempt to create a multiplayer version of *F-Zero*. The addition of the Mushroom Kingdom's inhabitants certainly didn't hurt, but it's the items that you can use to your advantage that really make this a competitive classic. It's not as chaotic as later games in the *Mario Kart* series, but if you're a frequent recipient of Blue Shells in those you may appreciate the relative purity of the racing here.

Super Mario Kart is a great starting point for any SNES collection, because as well as being one of the console's most popular games, it's pretty affordable across all regions. The game received a budget Player's Choice reissue in both North America and Europe, but the variant you choose doesn't seem to make a whole lot of difference to the price you'll pay.

EXPECT TO PAY £85+ USA

» [SNES] Rare's expertise with pre-rendered graphics helped its games to shine in the mid-Nineties.

» [SNES] Nintendo's relaxed rules on violence post-*Mortal Kombat* paved the way for games like *Killer Instinct*.

OUR PRICEY MUSIC

KILLER INSTINCT

EXPECT TO PAY £100+ EUROPE

DEVELOPER: RARE
RELEASE: 1995

■ Pre-rendered 3D sprites and crazy combos are the order of the day in this scrapper, a conversion of the arcade hit that purportedly used the technology of Nintendo's SNES successor, the Ultra 64. The 16-bit rendition actually comes across pretty well, giving fighting fans a nice alternative to the likes of *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat*.

The main driver of the price here is the bonus *Killer Cuts* soundtrack CD, which is typically missing from otherwise complete copies of the game. Without it, US copies go for £50+, while PAL copies start at about £25, assuming that the box and manual are present in decent condition for both regional versions.

BEST BABYSITTER

YOSHI'S ISLAND

EXPECT TO PAY £25+ JAPAN

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
RELEASE: 1995

EXPECT TO PAY £45+ EUROPE

EXPECT TO PAY £100+ USA

■ At a time when the SNES was being overshadowed by the arrival of 32-bit machines and starting to look a little long in the tooth, Yoshi's first solo platform adventure provided a welcome dose of Nintendo magic. Super FX 2 special effects were applied to some excellent crayon-sketch graphics, and the typically excellent game design persuaded players to keep the 16-bit faith a little longer.

One thing to note is that the European prices for this game are all over the place – we've seen it go over £100, but couldn't see any particular distinction between some copies that have gone for far less. It's also worth knowing that the Japanese version does contain some text boxes, mostly to explain controls and game mechanics.

» [SNES] Graphically, *Yoshi's Island* has aged far better than the 3D games it was competing with.

» [SNES] Interestingly, only the Western releases add *Super Mario World 2* to the title.

WHAT ABOUT MARIO?

He's the pinnacle of platformers, after all

Super Mario World

The best game of all time, as voted by you lot back in issue 150, is an extremely easy game to own – loose carts are cheap and common. However, because the game was bundled with consoles in North America and Europe, boxed copies are exceptionally difficult to find and often command a hefty price as a result. Think carefully about if you really, really need some extra cardboard for your game.

Super Mario All-Stars

This compilation of the NES *Super Mario Bros* games is excellent value, offering some fantastic games with lovely 16-bit makeovers. It's pretty affordable right around the world, so if you haven't already got the NES games, this is a great start to your collection. There's also a second version of the cart with *Super Mario World* included, which makes it even better value as a starter game.

Get loose

■ Remember, you're paying a hefty premium for cardboard boxes – you can easily save a lot of money by sticking to collecting loose cartridges.

Be patient

■ Choose auctions over Buy It Now on eBay if you want the best prices. Plus, a game might come to Nintendo Switch Online while you wait.

Matters of import

■ The only difference between North American and Japanese consoles is the cartridge shape, but PAL games have proper regional lock-out coding.

Look around

■ As always, eBay attracts higher prices because most people are looking there. Join Facebook groups and scour local sales listings for better deals.

CHEAP HITS

STREET FIGHTER II TURBO

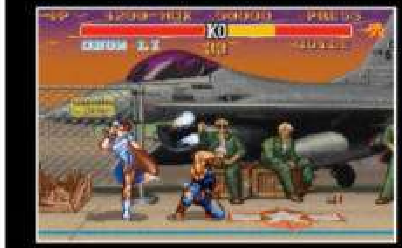
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

RELEASE: 1993

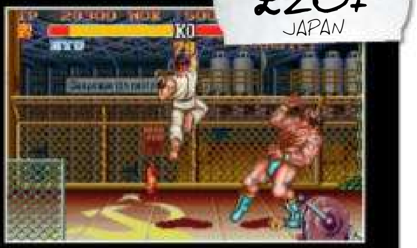
EXPECT TO PAY
£25+
EUROPE/USA

■ *Street Fighter* was an institution on the SNES, with Capcom releasing four games between 1992 and 1996, and while everyone will have their own favourite version we're guessing that most people would go for this one. It has the classic cast, without the *Super* characters but with playable bosses, and the speed adjustment allows you to make the game insanely fast if you choose. The great news is that the game was so successful back in the Nineties that it is an affordable classic today, with relatively low prices across all regions. PAL copies can tend to attract higher prices more consistently, with some going as high as £50, but if you wait for a bargain you'll soon come good.

EXPECT TO PAY
£20+
JAPAN



» [SNES] Guile blocks Chun Li's kicks, presumably before unleashing a nasty flash kick of his own.



» [SNES] That's a heck of a range on that dragon punch there, Ryu. What gives?

WORTHY CHALLENGERS

What do the other SNES Street Fighter games offer?

Street Fighter II

The original version of *Street Fighter II* was a killer app that put plenty of SNES hardware into homes, but it's the most basic option available, missing many of the extra moves and the playable boss characters of later iterations.

Super Street Fighter II

This version includes four additional characters – Cammy, T Hawk, Fei Long and Dee Jay. It's a good conversion in general but it's not as fast as *Street Fighter II Turbo* can be, which means some people prefer the older version.

Street Fighter Alpha 2

The final SNES *Street Fighter* is the most mechanically advanced and features plenty of new characters, including Sakura and Rolento. It's a massive technical achievement, but better home versions exist on more powerful platforms.

FUN GUNNER

CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

EXPECT TO PAY
£60+
JAPAN

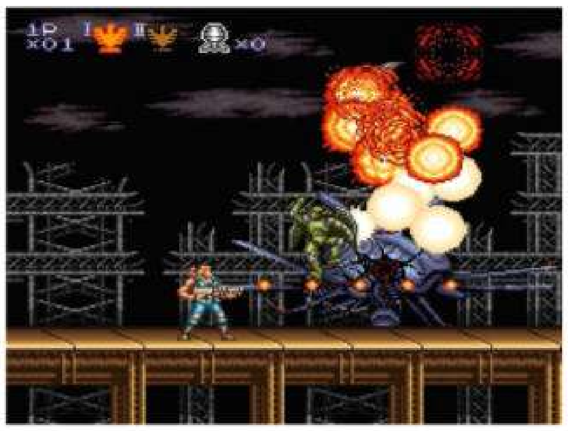
EXPECT TO PAY
£80+
USA

EXPECT TO PAY
£70+
EUROPE

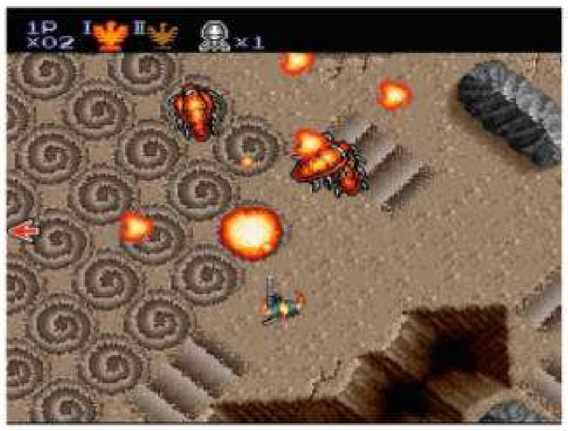
DEVELOPER: KONAMI

RELEASE: 1992

■ Konami seemed to be on another level compared to most developers in the 16-bit era, and this spectacular run-and-gun really benefits from the team's technical expertise – the action is relentless and features special effects that seem to push beyond the limits of the console. Because there aren't regional disparities in terms of pricing, we'd advise picking up either the North American release or *Contra Spirits*, the Japanese version. The PAL game, known as *Super Probotector: Alien Rebels*, has the usual edits to turn angry gun-toting blokes into angry gun-toting robo-blokes. The Game Boy Advance version sadly loses the Mode 7 stages, but the SNES Classic Mini has the American version included so it may be worth your while.



» [SNES] Other developers couldn't compete with the amount of on-screen action in *Contra III*.



» [SNES] The occasional Mode 7 sections helped to break up the side-scrolling action.

EYEBROW RAISER

ACTRAISER

EXPECT TO PAY
£100+
EUROPE

EXPECT TO PAY
£125+
USA

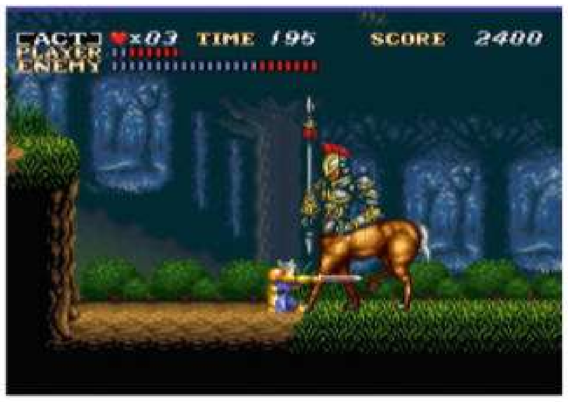
DEVELOPER: QUINTET

RELEASE: 1990

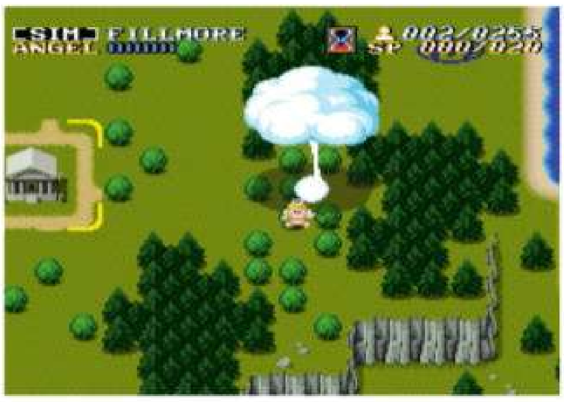
EXPECT TO PAY
£25+
JAPAN

■ Here's a game that is highly unique not just on the SNES, but in general – after all, how many games can you name that combine platform action with god game sections? Add an amazing soundtrack by Yuzo Koshiro, and it's amazing to think that it was one of the very earliest third-party SNES games. Unfortunately, it's one that doesn't come cheap these days, at least outside of Japan – the price has spiked over the last two years, most noticeably for the North American version.

The problem here is that although it has been reissued a couple of times, the Wii Virtual Console is now gone for good, and the 2021 update *Actraiser: Renaissance* is a very divisive version that makes a number of changes to the core gameplay. If you want to own a copy of the game that's authentic to your memories, you might just have to fork out a considerable sum and get the SNES version.

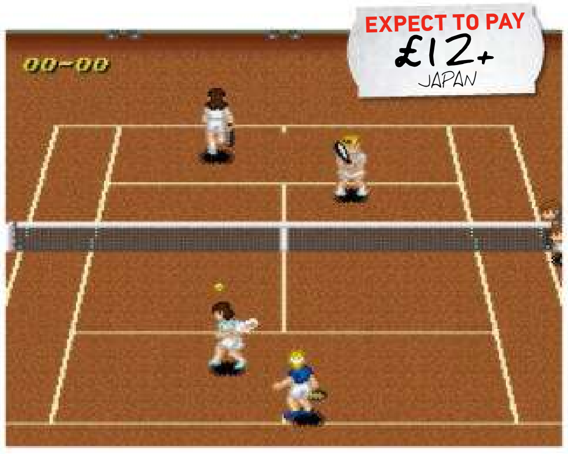


» [SNES] You can't hear screenshots, but if you could you'd be loving this. Trust us.



» [SNES] The god game sections really set *Actraiser* apart from everything else of the era.

» [SNES] "Go on Tim," you shout. Your child responds, "Who's Tim?" Suddenly, you feel very old.



» [SNES] *Super Tennis*, like many things in life, is better when shared with a doubles partner.

LOVE LOVE

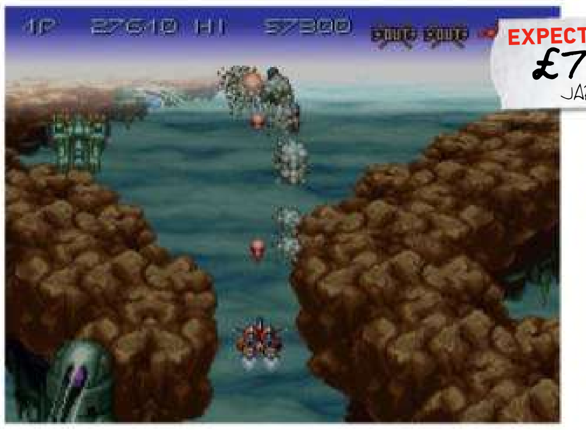
SUPER TENNIS

EXPECT TO PAY
£9+
USA

DEVELOPER:	TOSE
RELEASE:	1991

EXPECT TO PAY
£10+
EUROPE

■ Sports games aren't normally particularly expensive games, but that's often because they're quickly discarded due to the yearly update model that most of them work on. *Super Tennis* didn't have that issue, but it's still a game that manages to hold a very low price across all regions. *Super Tennis* is an all-time great sports game, which manages to pull off a similar trick to other great tennis games like *Smash Court Tennis* and *Virtua Tennis* – it's very easy to pick up and play and can offer hours of multiplayer fun, so even if you're not particularly interested in the sport itself, it's easy to get drawn into the game. So don't sleep on *Super Tennis* assuming that it's your average shelf-filler sports game – at the kind of prices it sells for, it should really be a foundational part of your SNES collection.



» [SNES] It's a strange-looking game to modern eyes, but *Axelay* has a style all of its own.

» [SNES] Boss encounters are a big part of *Axelay*'s appeal as a classic shooter.

AXE AND CASH

AXELAY

EXPECT TO PAY
£160+
USA

DEVELOPER:	KONAMI
RELEASE:	1992

EXPECT TO PAY
£60+
EUROPE

■ The perspective is unusual, but *Axelay* is fondly remembered by plenty of SNES shoot-'em-up fans for its spectacular graphics and challenging action. It's also tied to the SNES today, unless you happen to have a Wii U loaded with eShop credit to buy the Virtual Console release. All versions of *Axelay* have gone up in price over the course of 2022, with the North American version in particular doubling before settling down a little. But while the NTSC prices for this game are pretty stable, PAL copies are absolutely all over the place with no apparent reason why some copies go for loads of cash and others for relatively little, so European gamers might be able to grab a bargain relative to the price we've listed here.

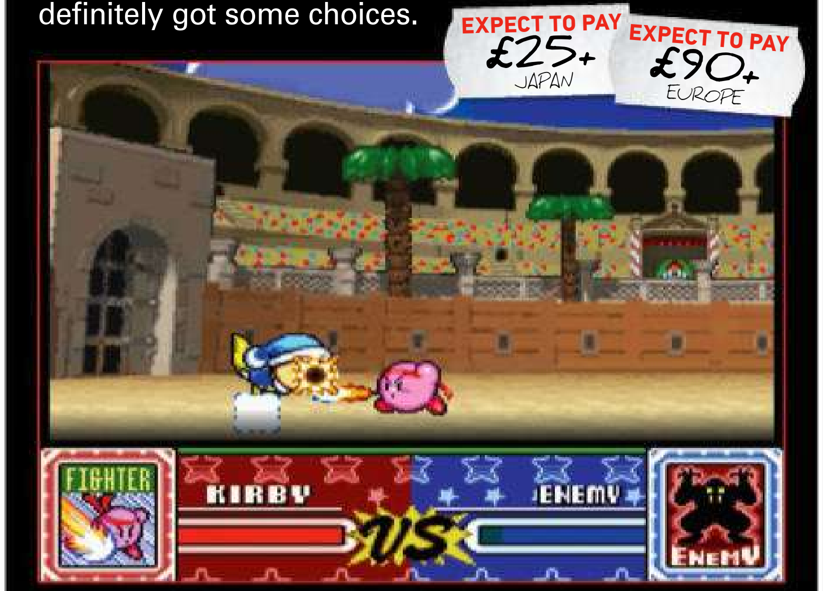
POWER PAK

KIRBY'S FUN PAK

DEVELOPER:	HAL LABORATORY/NINTENDO
RELEASE:	1996

EXPECT TO PAY
£160+
USA

■ This multi-game package is arguably the most popular *Kirby* game of the lot, with plenty of classic sections to get stuck into including Gourmet Race and a partial remake of *Kirby's Dream Land* titled Spring Breeze. This one has huge regional variations, with the Japanese version being very cheap and the North American version being quite pricey, despite appearing to be more common than the PAL release. If you're looking for a cheaper option but don't like buying Japanese games, it's also available on the SNES Classic Mini, Nintendo Switch Online subscriptions and the Wii compilation *Kirby's Dream Collection*, so you've definitely got some choices.



PINK POWER!

Kirby's other SNES adventures

Kirby's Dream Course

If you want a break from platform game action, this is an oddball crazy-golf game starring the rotund hero and his various enemies and allies. It's probably the weakest *Kirby* game on the SNES, but it is certainly a bit different.

Kirby's Avalanche

You know how *Puyo Puyo* used to get reskinned into all kinds of different games? Well, this is another example of that – it's the same puzzle gameplay you know and love, but with Kirby's big pink face plastered all over it.

Kirby's Dream Land 3

This is a lovely platform adventure, with beautiful pastel graphics that are almost as easy on the eye as the game design is on the player. As a late release, the North American version is quite pricey these days.

31"13
PLAYER
ENEMY
BE

Virtual On: Cyber Troopers

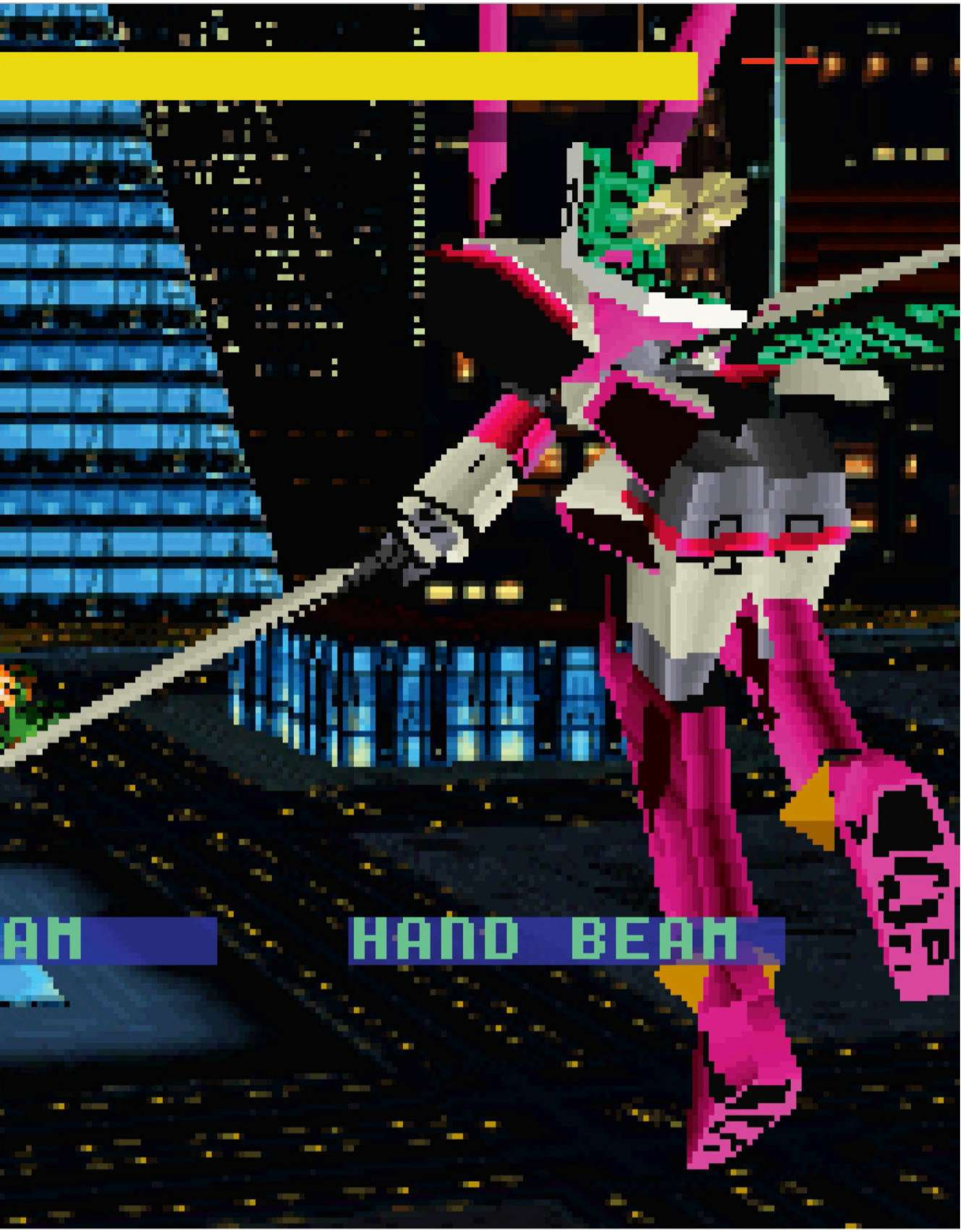
HOW TO MECH ME POOR

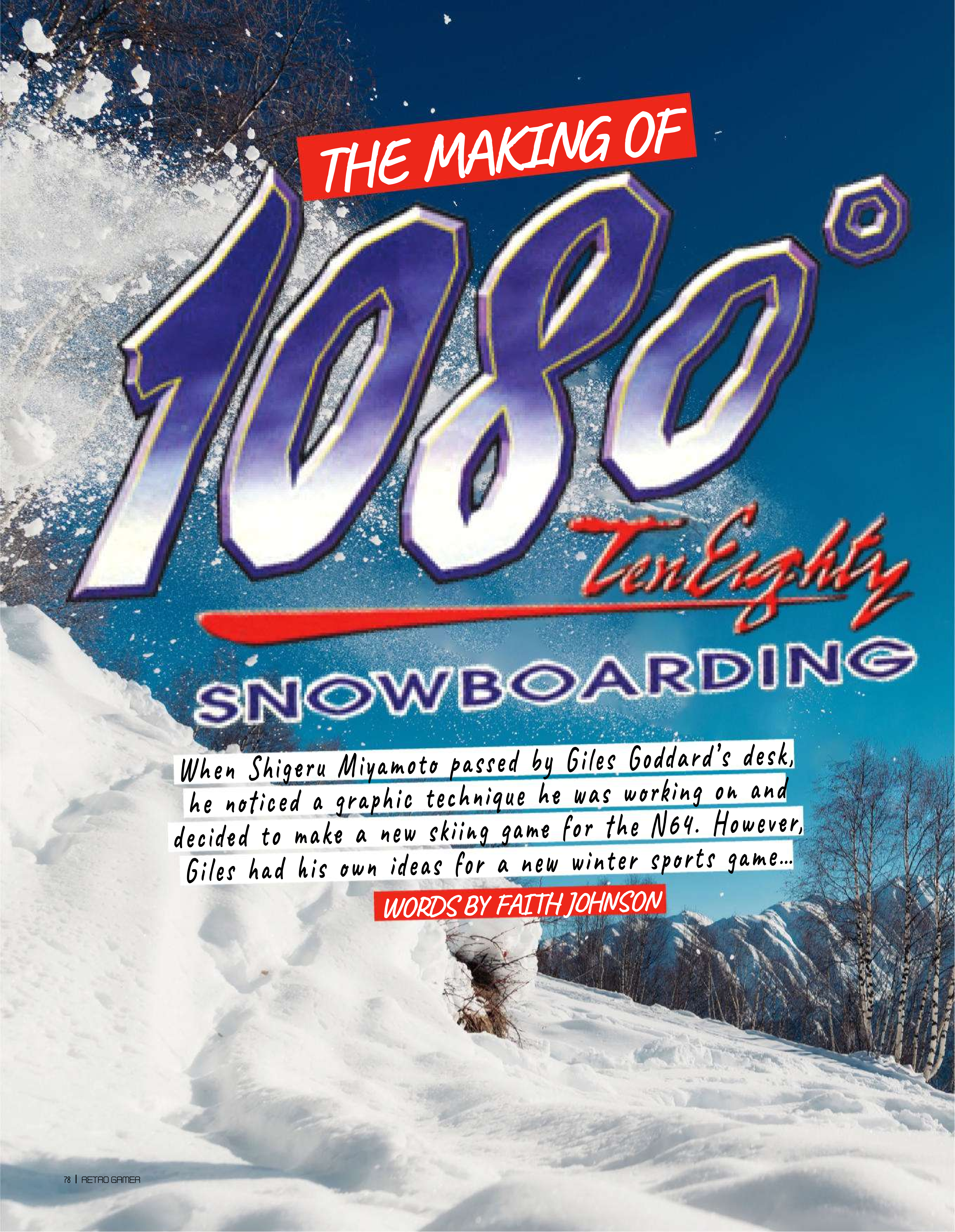
» SATURN » 1996 » CRI

If ever there was a machine in Sega Park that seemed to be there just for me, it was *Virtual On*. I'd heard of the game in magazines but didn't have a Saturn, so the arcade was my only hope of getting to play it. After a little bit of adjusting to those twin-stick controls, I was able to enjoy battling it out with some surprisingly agile giant robots. I feel like that control scheme might have put people off though, as I'm not sure I ever actually saw anybody else play that twin sit-down cabinet in the back corner, but I was more than happy that I never had to wait for a game. Of course, that also meant that the machine went away sooner than I would have liked.

My friend James ended up giving me his Saturn collection during a clear out a few years later, and despite having nearly 30 games to play, the *Sega Flash Vol 4* demo disc caught my attention early on. That's partially because it had a demo of *Sonic 3D*, but mostly because it allowed me to play *Virtual On* for the first time in ages. Getting back into those frenetic fights and actually hearing the music instead of a noisy arcade, I fell in love all over again and eventually picked up the proper game.

Somehow though, this game still manages to goad me into spending more money, and the Dreamcast sequel is just the tip of the iceberg. Did you know there was an online version of *Virtual On* for the Saturn? Did you know that fans have been working to get it running via DreamPi? I do, and now I own a modem for the Saturn, and I suppose if I want to do my best against my online opponents I should probably invest in the twin-stick peripheral too. But I can stop any time I want. Honest. ✱


AM
HAND BEAM



THE MAKING OF

1080° TenEighty SNOWBOARDING

When Shigeru Miyamoto passed by Giles Goddard's desk, he noticed a graphic technique he was working on and decided to make a new skiing game for the N64. However, Giles had his own ideas for a new winter sports game…

WORDS BY FAITH JOHNSON

Snowboarding was the freshest sport on the slopes when Giles Goddard became hooked in the Nineties. He's still a keen snowboarder to this day and has recently released *Carve*, a VR snowboarding game for modern platforms (see issue 225). But back in early 1997, Giles was working on a new graphics technique that created realistic-looking limbs that bend and twist. "I had this prototype demonstrating inverse kinematics and wasn't sure how to test it. So, I had this arm that was attached to a ski pole and the arm was flailing around. That's where the topic of making a ski game came up with Miyamoto. There weren't any good skiing games for the N64 and Miyamoto said, 'Let's make a skiing game.'"

Giles advised Shigeru Miyamoto that it would be better to go with one board instead of two skis. "Around that time, snowboarding had just begun to grow into a big thing. So, we had a discussion about which one would be more fun. A typical ski game, simply turning left and right, or a game where you can jump onto things and have massive leaps, twists, grabs and all this kind of stuff. It's a no-brainer that's going to be the more interesting game."

After the decision was made, Giles continued developing the technology. "I was playing around with AI inverse kinematics, which is a way of animating limbs programmatically," he continues. "You don't animate by hand, you get the CPU to animate things. I was into using that kind of technique because it meant you could do all sorts of cool things. A lot of these things came from experiments that somebody happened upon when walking past my desk at the time."

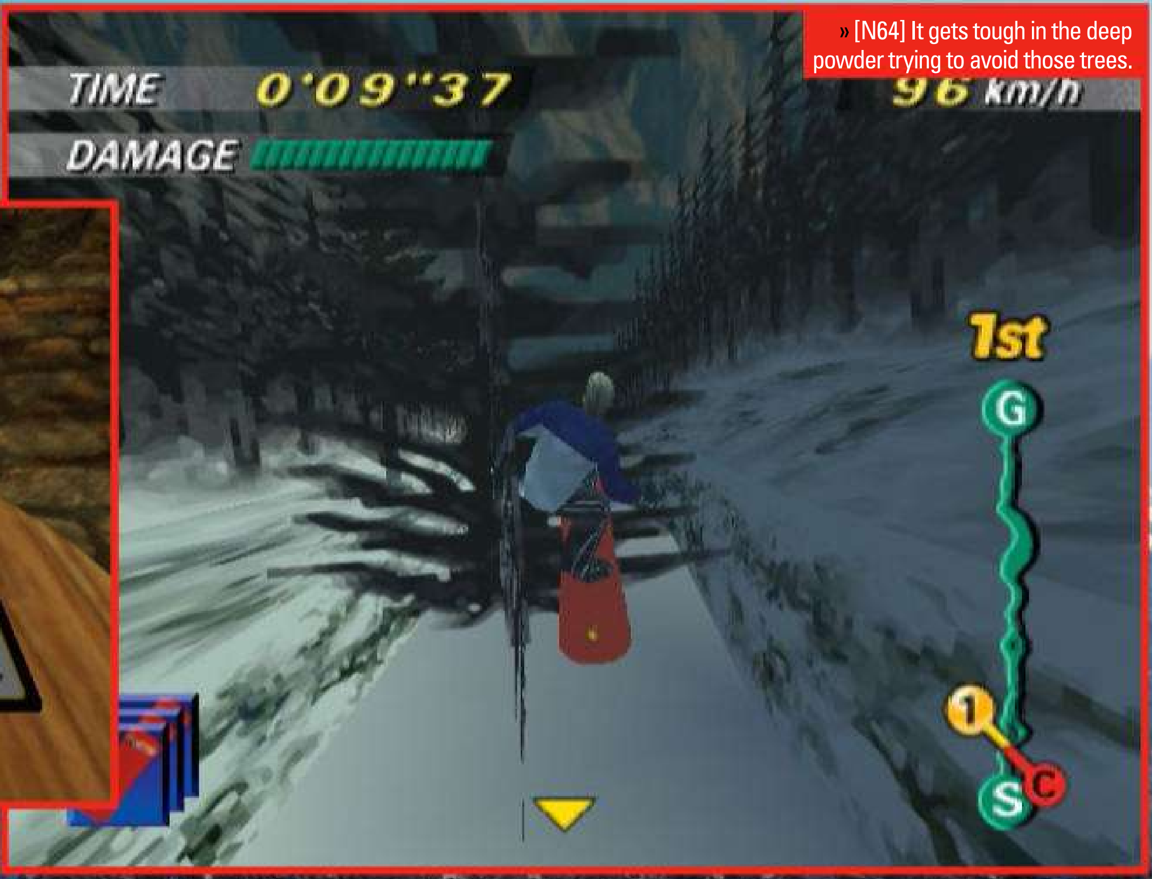
» Giles Goddard was the lead designer on *1080° Snowboarding* and is now CEO of Chuhai Labs.

Once the game design got underway, Giles explains that he was simply left to get on with the development. "I think they just let us run with it. At the time, I was working in the N64 research group and it was my task to figure out what it could actually do to get the most realistic-looking graphics on the N64." This was quite a departure from a typical Nintendo game with Giles adding, "All their other games, like *Zelda* and *Mario 64*, had a very intended look, very anime, very stylised look. With *1080°*, I wanted it to look completely different to all those games. It was a very conscious decision to make it look very unlike *Mario*."

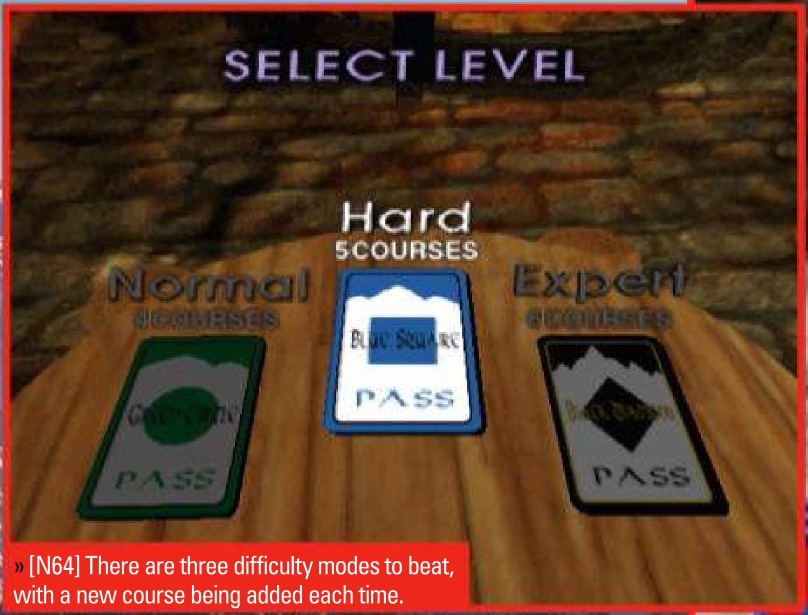
It was this search for realism that led Giles to use a technique called skinning. "When you make 3D graphics or a 3D character, you make parts for them," he elaborates. "You don't make an entire arm, you make a hand, forearm and upper arm. And then you join them together using a bone system.

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD
- » **RELEASED:** 1998
- » **PLATFORM:** N64
- » **GENRE:** EXTREME SPORTS



» [N64] It gets tough in the deep powder trying to avoid those trees.



» [N64] There are three difficulty modes to beat, with a new course being added each time.

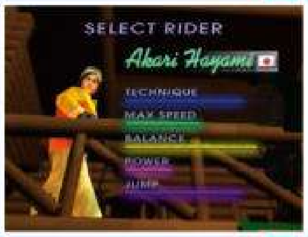
© Getty

THE COOL BOARDERS

MEET THE CAST OF 1080° SNOWBOARDING

AKARI HAYAMI

Akari is a happy-go-lucky boarder from Japan who focusses on technique over speed and power. She's a good choice for beginners learning the game due to her great balance that will stop you from crashing out on jumps and turns.


SELECT RIDER
Akari Hayami
TECHNIQUE
MAX SPEED
BALANCE
POWER
JUMP

DION BLASTER

Being the fastest boarder in *1080° Snowboarding* makes Dion the best choice for racing and his power is useful for bashing away rivals as you jostle for position. However, Dion lacks balance and has a tendency to crash out on corners and jumps.

SELECT RIDER
Dion Blaster
TECHNIQUE
MAX SPEED
BALANCE
POWER
JUMP

KENSUKE KIMACHI

Kensuke is a great all-rounder with decent speed, balance and technique. He is a great choice for nailing the tricks on the courses as well as finishing with a good time. His poor jump means he struggles with the Big Air and Half-Pipe events.

SELECT RIDER
Kensuke Kimachi
TECHNIQUE
MAX SPEED
BALANCE
POWER
JUMP

RICKY WINTERBORN

If you need help landing your tricks or pulling huge combos on the half-pipe then look no further than Ricky. His jump enables him to leap higher and further than the others and his great technique makes pulling the infamous 1080° trick a breeze.

SELECT RIDER
Ricky Winterborn
TECHNIQUE
MAX SPEED
BALANCE
POWER
JUMP

ROB HAYWOOD

Rob can be considered the best all-round boarder and is your go-to to win the Expert Course and two-player races. He rarely crashes out and has decent stats for pulling tricks while keeping control. He's also the coolest boarder with his snazzy shades.

SELECT RIDER
Rob Haywood
TECHNIQUE
MAX SPEED
BALANCE
POWER
JUMP

It's great for characters like Mario, but the problem is in-between the joints. You can see the polygons overlapping each other and it looks unrealistic and unnatural. So, the skinning merges those models together to create a continuous shape that will still bend naturally…"

It wasn't just the realistic character models that helped *1080° Snowboarding* stand out, the snow on the slopes was an important part of creating a realistic simulation as well. "The goal was to make it feel realistic by having these different types of snow," Giles says. "You need three types: soft powder, normal snow and then the ice. Without those, you basically have this very generic experience that may as well be a driving game. There's nothing unique about being on a flat surface and just skating around. So, each type of snow has a very different characteristic in terms of physics and looks. It was vital to have these different surfaces otherwise the game wouldn't have worked."

And if the snow effects weren't enough, the team went the extra mile producing some impressive weather effects that appear throughout *1080° Snowboarding*. Giles explains that creating realistic weather was quite easy at the time. "You can add

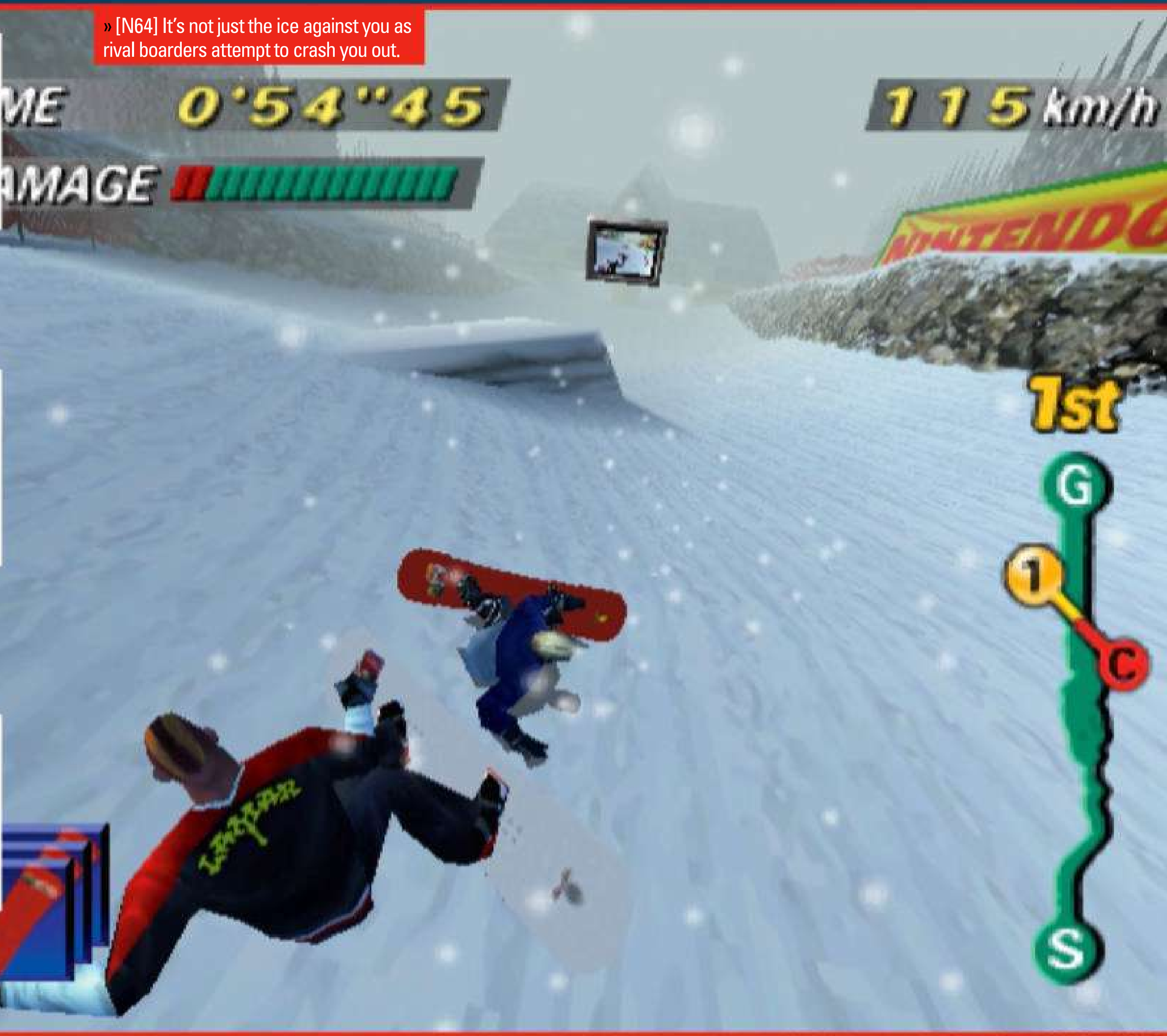
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SUPER MARIO BROS(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: NES
YEAR: 1985

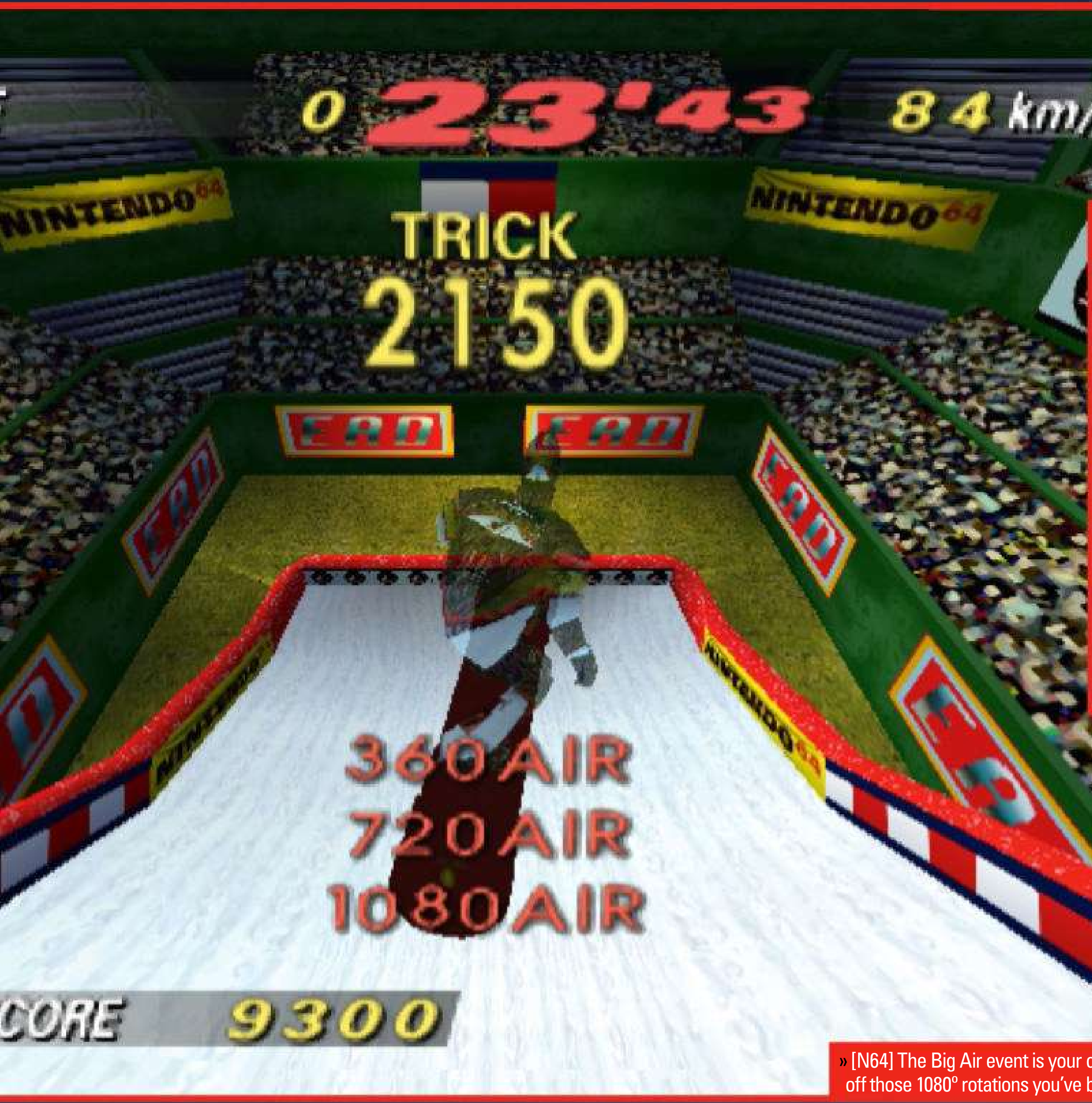
F-ZERO
SYSTEM: SNES
YEAR: 1990

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
SYSTEM: SNES
YEAR: 1991

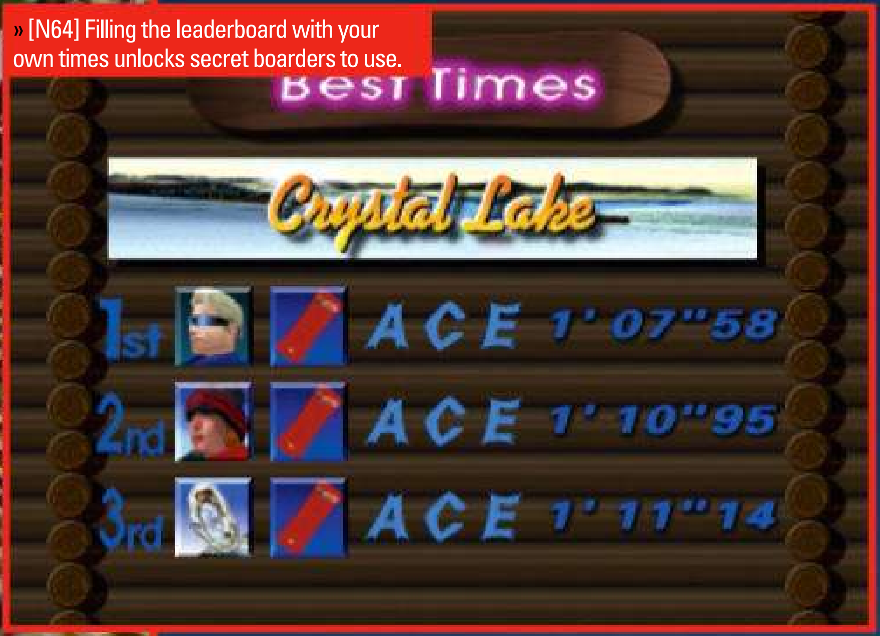
SCORE
BEST S


ME
0'54"45
115 km/h
AMAGE
1st
G
1
C
S

» [N64] It's not just the ice against you as rival boarders attempt to crash you out.



» [N64] The Big Air event is your chance to show off those 1080° rotations you've been practising.



» [N64] Filling the leaderboard with your own times unlocks secret boarders to use.

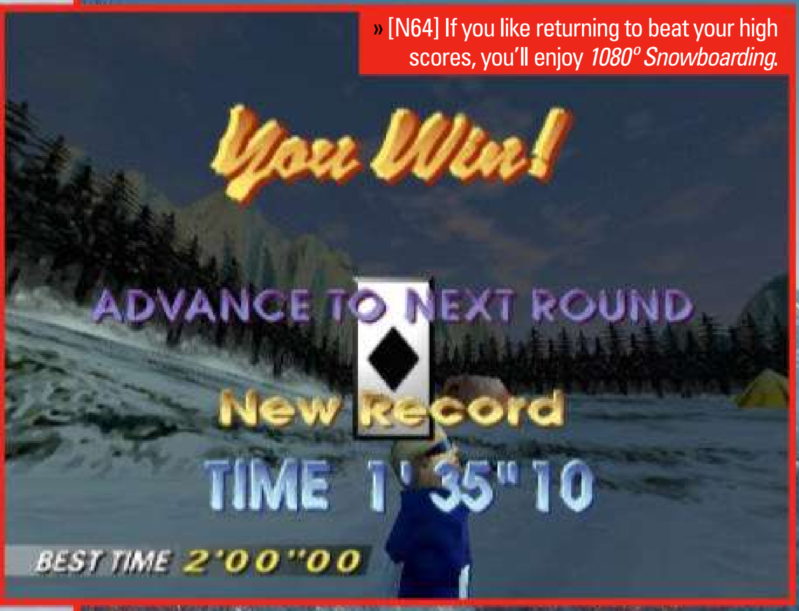
fog that cuts the drawing distance," he begins. "You know the number of polygons you can see on the screen at once and you cut them down. That gives you a lot more GPU power to use somewhere else. You can use the extra power to draw extra stuff like the snow particles that hit your eyes. So, you take one thing down, you move it, and you pull something else out. From a technical standpoint, it's actually quite easy to do anything once you introduce fog."

For all the great effects that Giles was able to use to create a realistic game, he was still constrained by the overall power of the N64. "Most of the decisions revolved around how it affected the framerate and it was the number-one goal to keep it within 30 frames a second. If you wanted to win an argument as a programmer back in those days, you just said, 'Well, we don't have enough GPU to draw that.' So, you keep putting stuff in until you hit that limit." The limitations of Nintendo's console also helped with decisions about how many objects would be included in each course. "Because we wanted to create that realistic snowboard feel, you aren't going to have all these buildings and stuff everywhere," Giles explains. "Even without putting extra stuff in, you couldn't just draw an entire course because that would take too much time. You have to cut it into bits and then decide how all that fits together. So even just drawing the ground itself was a major undertaking."

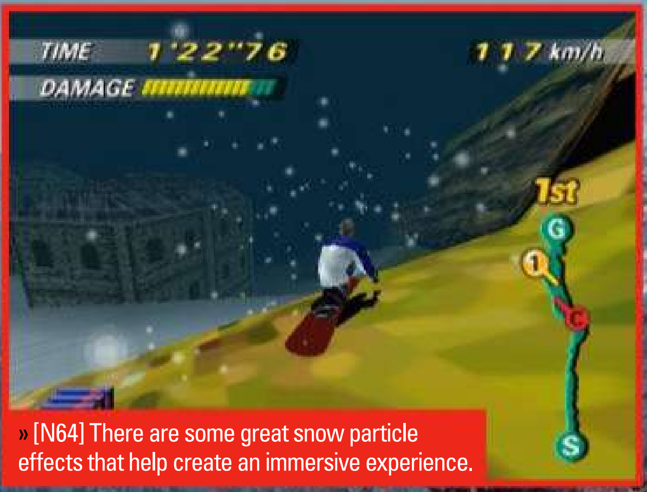
> "CAN YOU IMAGINE NINTENDO USING KEITH FLINT IN THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL?"
>
> GILES GODDARD

Giles found one of the bigger challenges came when the team was implementing the multiplayer mode. "With the two-player split-screen, you've potentially got four characters on-screen that you'll be showing," he explains. "Because you race somebody that could be very close to your own character, you can see yourself on their screen and they can possibly see themselves on your screen as well. To get it working we had to redo the entire game engine from scratch in some parts."

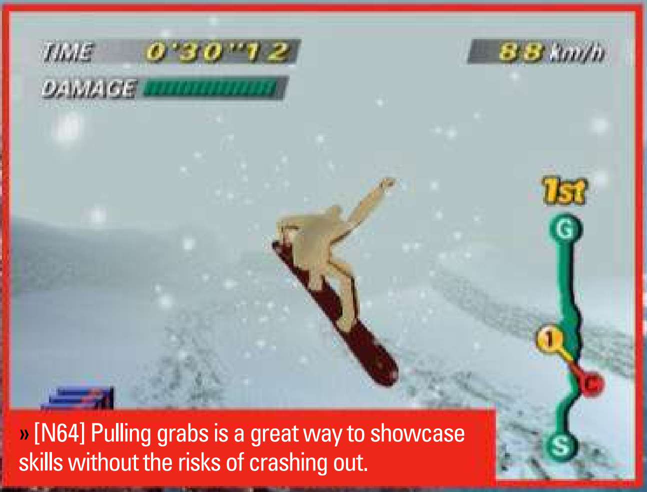
It wasn't just the N64 graphic capabilities that caused headaches for the team. The limited storage space on the N64 cartridges caused issues as well. "That was a huge part of making the game," Giles recalls. "How do we fit all of this into a cart ▶



» [N64] If you like returning to beat your high scores, you'll enjoy *1080° Snowboarding*.

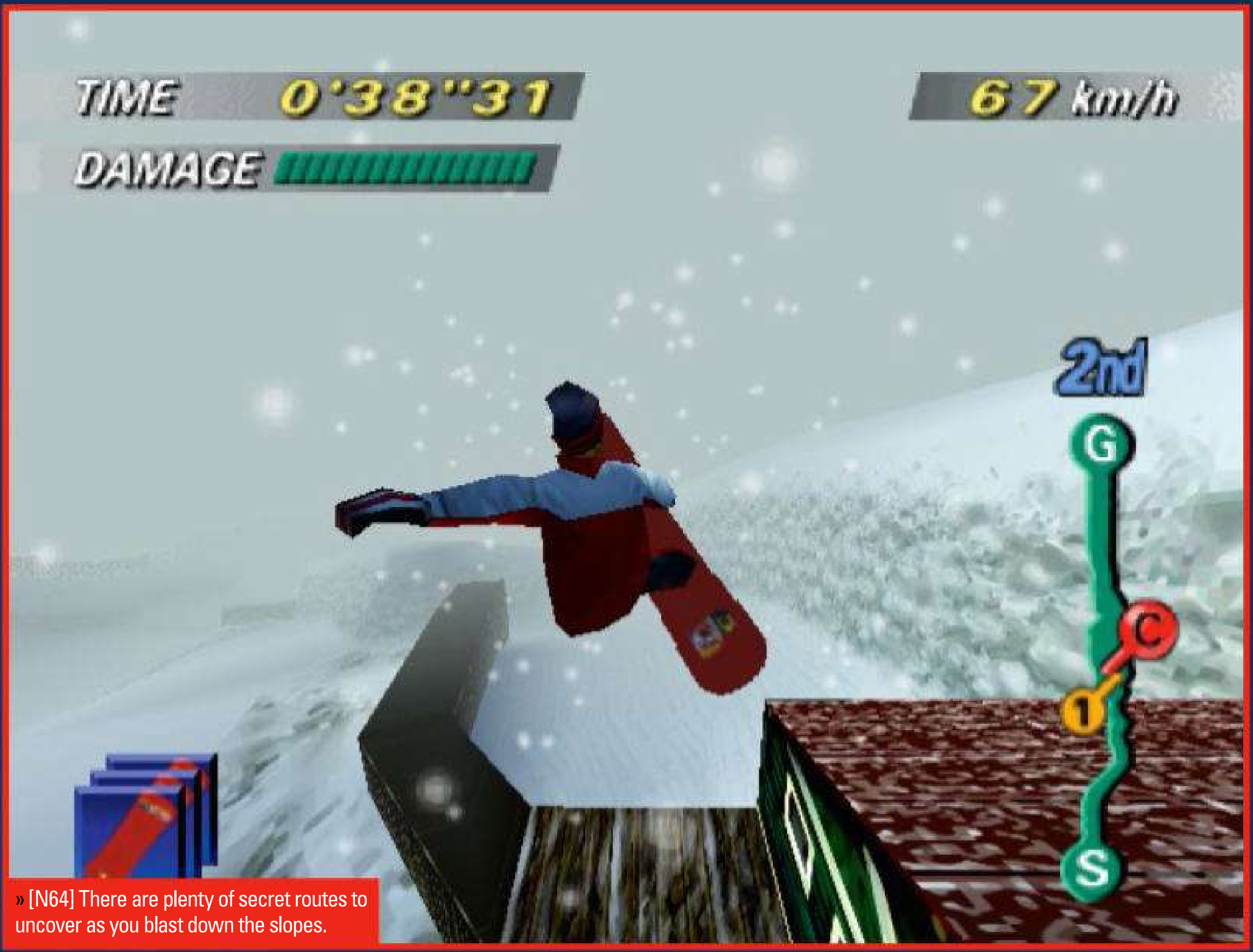


» [N64] There are some great snow particle effects that help create an immersive experience.



» [N64] Pulling grabs is a great way to showcase skills without the risks of crashing out.

© Getty



» [N64] There are plenty of secret routes to uncover as you blast down the slopes.

when everything from the data to the code has to fit in the RAM? When you make a game, everything from the code and the data gets clumped together into a zip file, and that's your ROM." To enable the N64 to handle *1080° Snowboarding*'s large data files Giles had to design a new way for the data to be loaded into the system. "We made this new technology that swapped code in and out in real-time and patched it all up. So that's how we got quicker load times and more space to use. Also, that was the technique used for every N64 game afterwards, we called it a dynamic loader." This proved popular as Giles explains. "It's a win-win for the programmers, software designers and hardware designers. We always wanted to use that system going forward rather than the old way of just dumping it all in one go."

Playing *1080° Snowboarding* feels natural and this is largely down to the N64 controller and its intuitive analogue stick. Your boarder sways around the slopes at ease and it's possible to play the game with one hand during certain sections. Giles explains that it was important to get this right. "Designing the game was one to one with the controller because Nintendo wanted to use it to its full potential," he says. "It's one of the first controllers with a proper analogue stick and it was a good fit for that kind of game." A feature of the game's controls is using the Z-trigger to bend your boarder's knees. This added to the sense of realism, especially when landing tricks and picking up speed on the slopes. The unique idea came from Miyamoto, and Giles felt it was a weird thing to include but admitted it added plenty to the gameplay. "It adds the timing mechanic to the landing, which is true in real-life snowboarding. Miyamoto is a skier, not a snowboarder, and you have to bend your knees a lot in skiing."

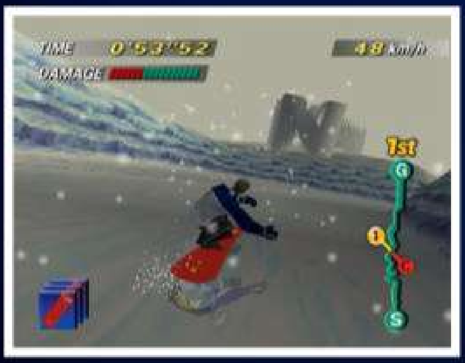
1080° Snowboarding has a punk-rock soundtrack that sounded different from the usual music Nintendo would use. However, before the soundtrack was finalised, Giles used his own musical influences to showcase early demos of the game. "When I was putting together early demos of *1080°*, I used to make videos to show in shops and to potential people buying the game," he says. "At the time, I was really into Prodigy and *The Fat Of The Land* had just come out. I used some Prodigy tracks on the demos and it just fitted so well with the aesthetic of *1080°*." Giles's face lights up as he says. "I later found out that Prodigy's Liam Howlett was a big fan of *1080°*, which is pretty cool."

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

COOL THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN YOU'RE ON THE SLOPES

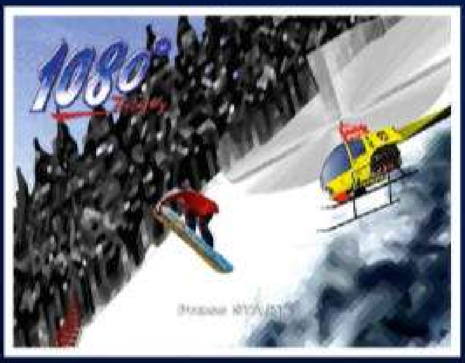
ICE CUBE LOVES N64

One of the earliest moments that grabs your attention in *1080° Snowboarding* is the N64 ice cube that appears as you tackle a tough corner on an ice patch. Be careful admiring the beautiful artwork though, it's easy to slip out on this corner and lose your race.



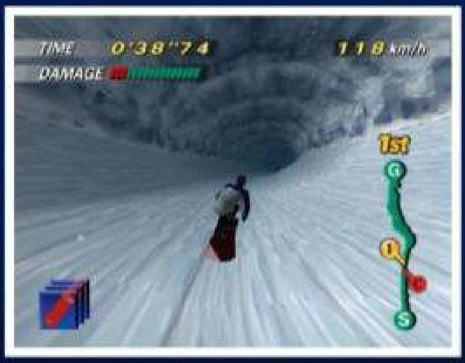
GET TO THE CHOPPER

There are several iconic moments during play where a helicopter appears and follows your boarder for a short while as you weave in and out of turns. It looks spectacular and expert players can get quite close to the chopper with a well-timed jump.



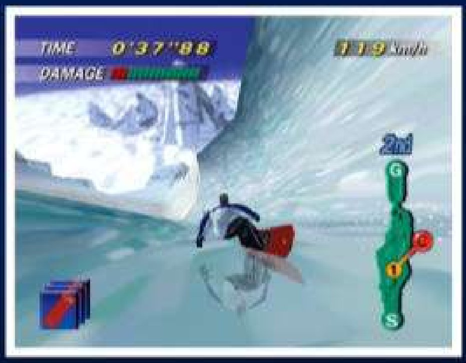
ICE ICE BABY

A tough section is this ice cavern that has several different routes to take. Make a wrong turn and you will find yourself in trouble. The best route depends on your skill level but you can't go wrong by heading right, right and finally going for the centre.



ICE HALF-PIPE, DEAD AHEAD!

On the final course you find yourself jumping off a huge cliff that leads into a gigantic ice half-pipe. If you survived the initial big drop you will now need all the skills you've learned to keep control during this slippery section. Good luck!



Sadly, Nintendo wouldn't go with Giles' idea to include Prodigy on the soundtrack but he muses on the possibility. "I wasn't involved in the final music and Nintendo would never have gone for Prodigy anyway. Can you imagine Nintendo using Keith Flint in the promotional material?"

Any extreme sports title worth its weight in snow needs to have an array of tricks to pull off. These are not just for showcasing your style either, *1080° Snowboarding* cannot be fully completed without performing every trick and scoring some big combos. But before *1080° Snowboarding*, the only other snowboarding simulator was *Cool Boarders* and the PlayStation exclusive boasted a complex system of combining rotations with board grabs. When it came to designing *1080° Snowboarding* however, Giles took a different approach by separating boarder rotations from the grabs. This limited the combinations players could use to rack up scores and ultimately relegated the trick portion of the game to second place, far behind the more exciting racing sections. "I think it was just to simplify things but I actually didn't like the trick system." Giles explains, "We were worried that it would be too complicated if you could do things like a grab and a twist, spin or flip at the same time. We wanted to make it very easy to understand and you're either doing the grab or you're doing the spin. Also, I think we only had one animator, and he was busy with other things as well. So, resources were stretched on a very tiny team."

Another departure for Nintendo was the decision to use real-life companies as sponsors for the equipment within the game. LaMar and Burton were fledgling snowboard makers at the time and working with Nintendo would've boosted their brand in a growing sport. Giles remembers that Nintendo, "Wanted some kind of tie-up with a snowboard firm to make it more legitimate. Otherwise, it's just too generic. I think they were trying to aim for a bit of attitude, but not too much attitude. So, to have that you'd need some kind of trendy brand in there somewhere."

> "IT GOES TO SHOW THAT EVEN NINTENDO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT GAMES ARE GOING TO SELL"
>
> **GILES GODDARD**

There was also a moment when Giles thought the game might get cancelled after it scored poorly during testing. "It got a really low score in the internal Nintendo tests, anything under a six is bad and they don't usually release the game. I just thought it was going to be a complete flop. But it goes to show that even Nintendo doesn't know what games are going to sell," he says. "I was surprised that they actually didn't drop it because it didn't really cost them that much to make it and it wasn't adding to any of their franchises at the time."

When reflecting on *1080° Snowboarding*, Giles feels the reason for its success was down to "the controls and the physics. Because those are the things we spent the most time working on. A lot of games don't get the same effort put into the little things like camera movements, or the tiny, subtle physics reactions". *1080° Snowboarding* sold over two-million units worldwide and had a GameCube sequel that didn't quite live up to the original. Nintendo went outside its comfort zone allowing Giles and his team to experiment with the N64 and *1080° Snowboarding* still stands out as one of the system's more unique titles. It also helped pave the way for the realistic physics we see in the extreme sports genre today. That's quite the legacy. ★

FINDING THE PERFECT BALANCE

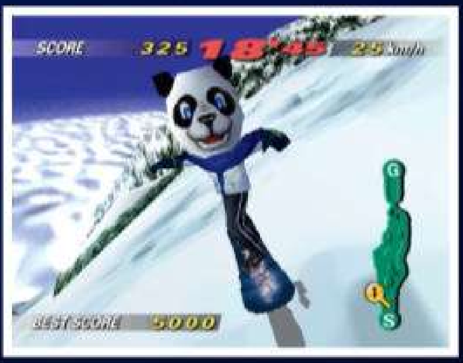
HOW GILES AND THE TEAM TWEAKED 1080° SNOWBOARDING'S DIFFICULTY

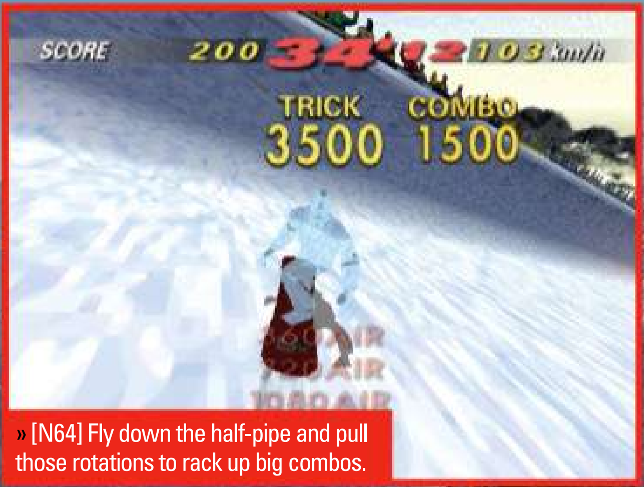
■ *1080° Snowboarding* is a tough game and finishing all the courses and nailing all the tricks takes practise and patience. Giles feels that, "At that time, people expected the games to be hard and they were disappointed if they were too easy. So, you had this fine balance trying to appease the real hardcore gamers who want a full game for their money, which meant them having to work hard to see the best things they can get in the game. You also have to make sure that people aren't alienated before they've even had a chance to play, so it's quite a difficult balance."

That wasn't the only challenge. "Nintendo was always against the infinite retry mentality in those days, it was very much that they were making arcade games for the home. So, if you run out of credits then you die and had to start from scratch," Giles explains. He had another frustration with the board damage gauge, which he feels should have been removed. "I hated it because there was no indication that your board was getting chipped away. Then suddenly it will fail and you die. If your bar's really low and you clip something, you're dead. You couldn't really tell that you were going to suddenly fail and I hated that."

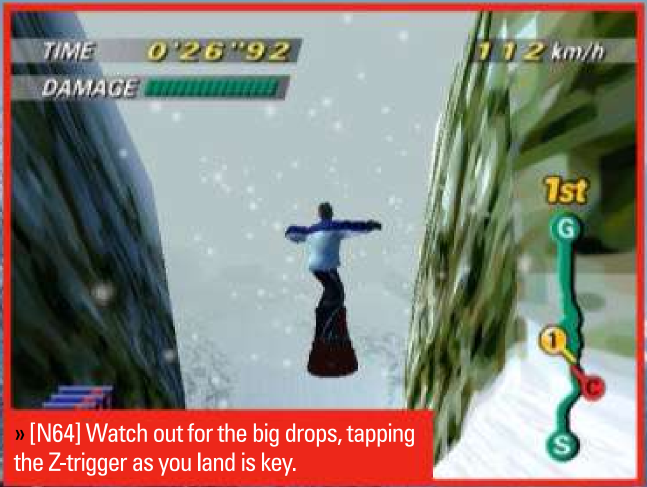
PANDA PERFECTION

If you manage to get through *1080° Snowboarding*'s toughest challenges you will be rewarded with a few secret boarders and snowboards that have better stats. One of the funniest moments of the game is unlocking a panda that has his own secret tricks to master.





» [N64] Fly down the half-pipe and pull those rotations to rack up big combos.



» [N64] Watch out for the big drops, tapping the Z-trigger as you land is key.

© Getty

retro GAMER's Favourite...

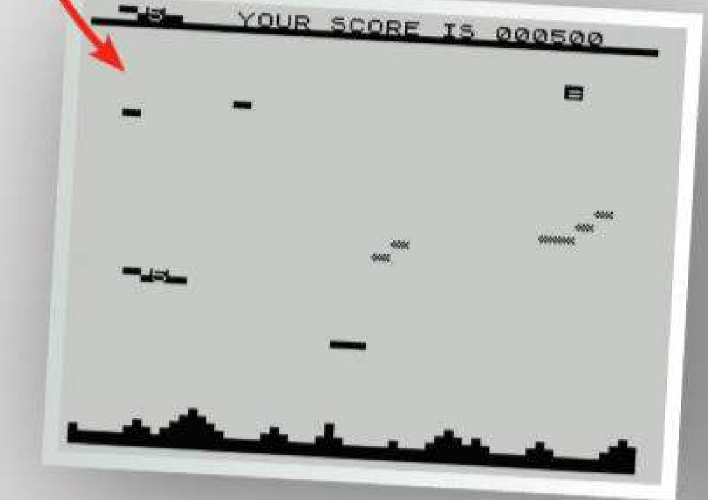
CHEEKY CLONES

In the days before respecting other people's intellectual property became an inconvenient necessity, the videogame business was full of blatant clones and shameless rip-offs. Here are some of our favourite poorly disguised pastiches

DEFENDA (ZX81)

CLONE OF: DEFENDER

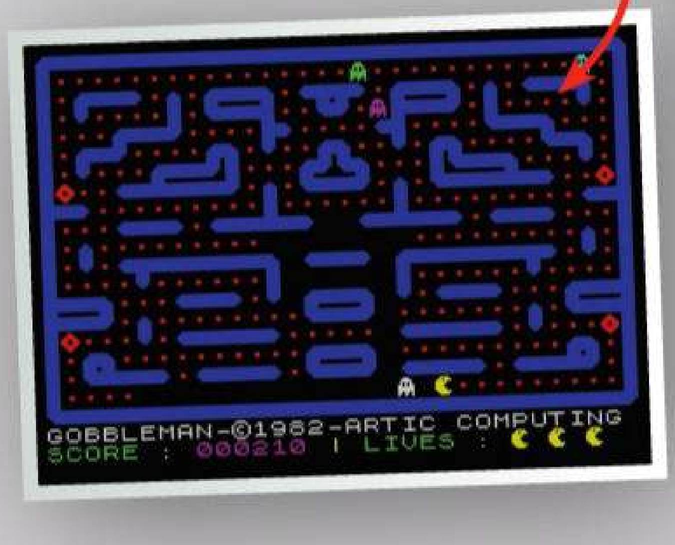
■ Kudos to Quicksilva for squeezing Williams' mighty shoot-'em-up onto the humble ZX81 but only bothering to change a single letter of the original's title? Come on chaps. Try harder. Same goes for anyone releasing a *Skramble*, *Zalaga*, *Monkey Kong* or *Donkey King*. And your dyslexia defence will not stand up in court, either.



GOBBLEMAN (ZX SPECTRUM)

CLONE OF: PAC-MAN

■ From the Vic-20's *Jelly Monsters* to *Munchkin* for the Philips Videopac, *Pac-Man* must be the most cloned videogame ever, with brazen impersonations of the rotund, yellow glutton appearing on a vast array of platforms. World Of Spectrum alone has listings for 78 versions. We like this one as it also happens to be our Grindr profile name. [It's not mine – Ed]

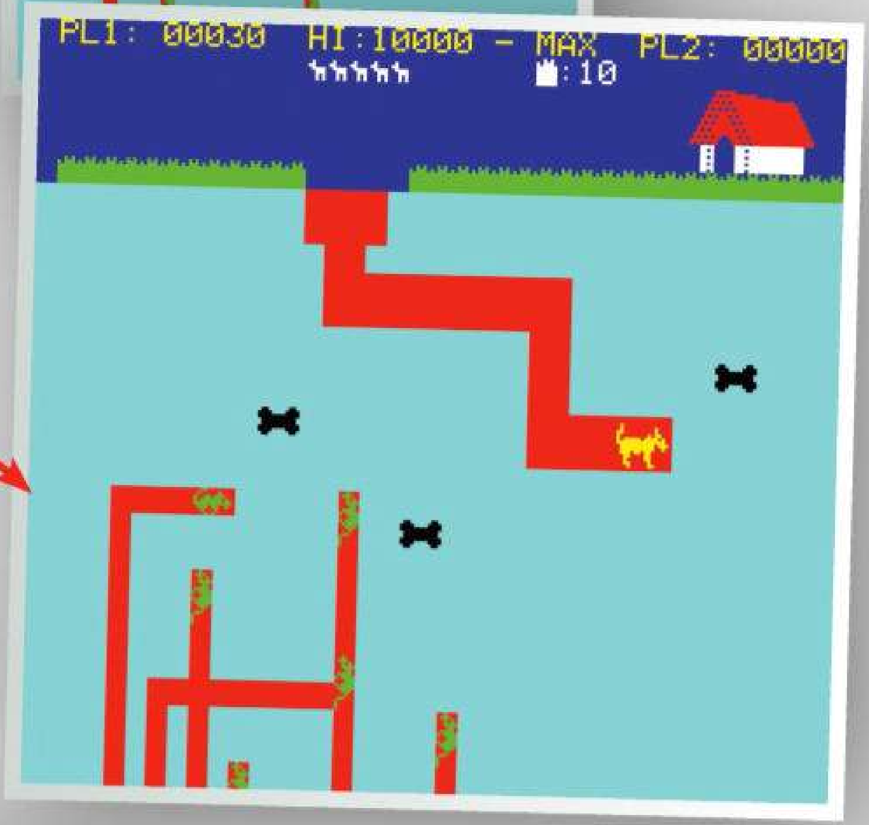


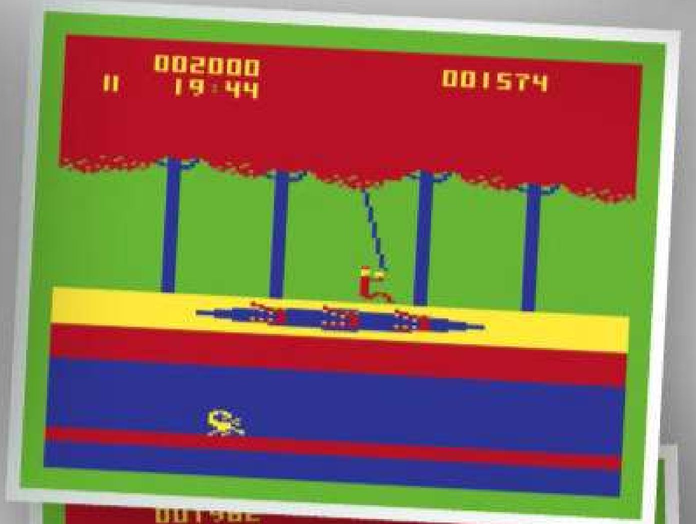
DIG DOG (ORIC)

CLONE OF: DIG DUG

■ A cursory glance at this early effort by Taskset and you might conclude it has given Namco's earth-moving arcade hit a canine makeover and hoped no one would notice. The truth is Namco 'borrowed' the idea for *Dig Dug* from *The Pit*, a game created by Taskset founder Andy Walker – who then decided to byte back.

PL1: 00140 HI:10000 - MAX PL2: 00000
:11





CUTHBERT IN THE JUNGLE (DRAGON 32)

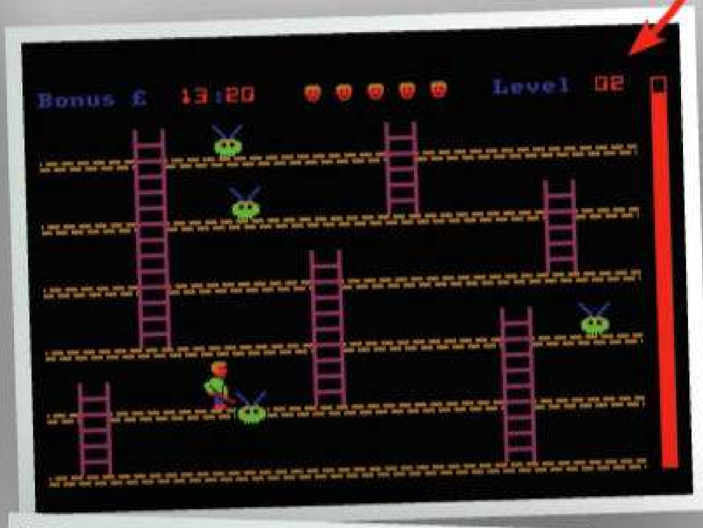
CLONE OF: PITFALL!

■ There was a reason Aldi called its copycat caterpillar cake Cuthbert – the name has long been associated with copyright infringement. Whether he's ripping off *Amidar* when he *Goes Walkabout*, *Jetpac* during his time *In Space* or this shameless clone of David Crane's *Pitfall!*, Cuthbert's smiling, bespectacled face suggests he doesn't give a monkey's.

ROLAND GOES DIGGING (AMSTRAD CPC)

CLONE OF: SPACE PANIC

■ Roland's adventures *On The Ropes* and *In The Caves* were at least officially sanctioned clones of Indescomp titles *Fred* and *Bugaboo (The Flea)* respectively, but this is a blatant rip-off of Universal's alien-burying arcade hit. Rumours of a planned sequel aimed at the adult market, *Roland Goes Dogging*, remain unconfirmed.

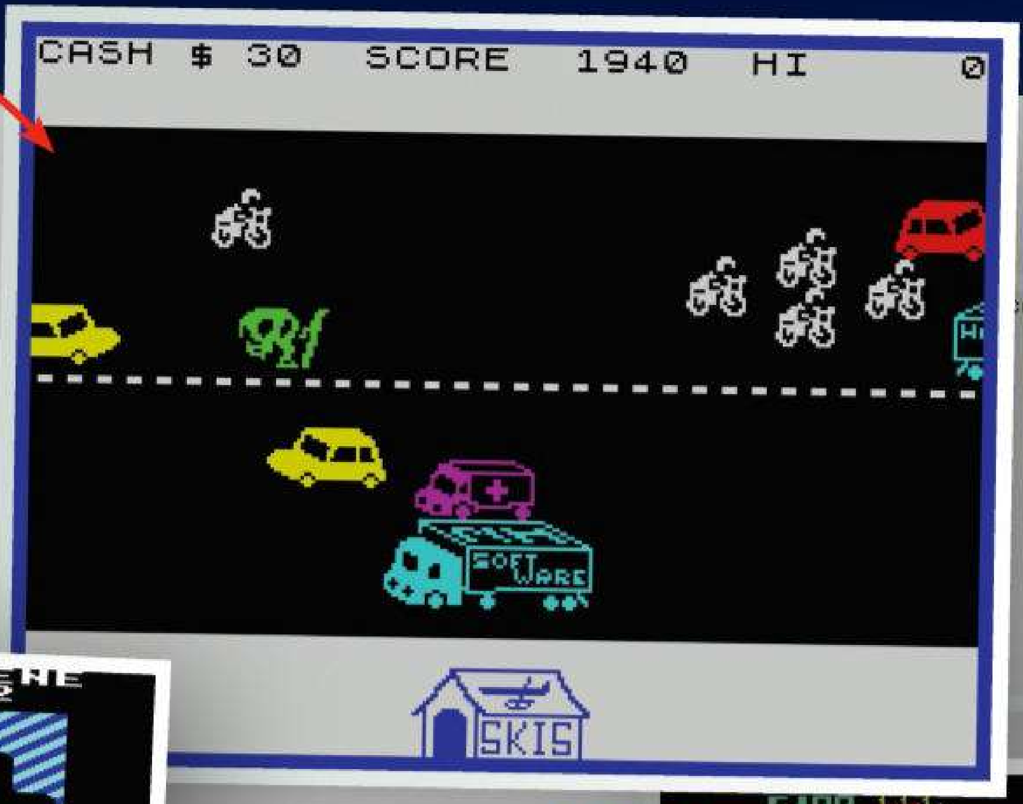


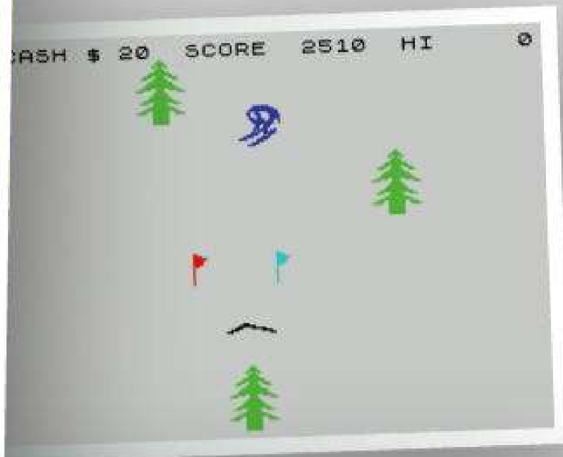
Bonus £ 13:20
Level 02

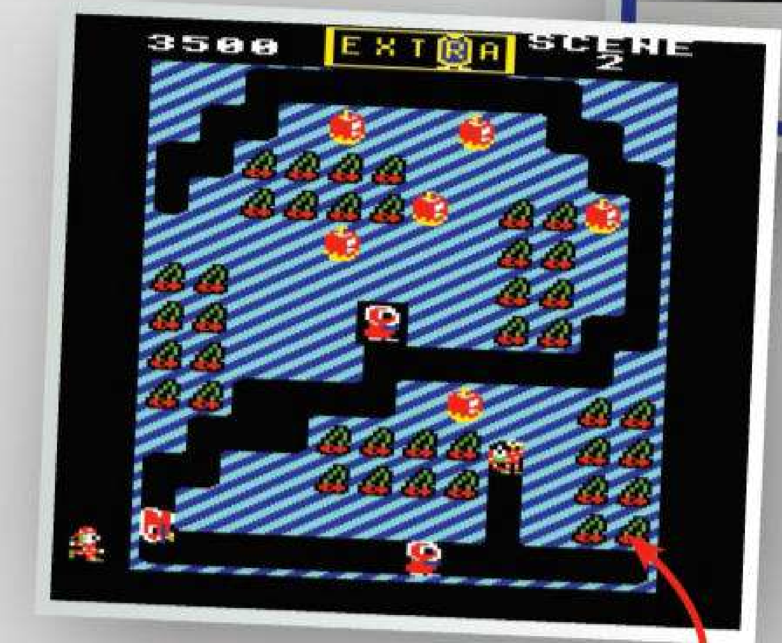
HORACE GOES SKIING (ZX SPECTRUM)

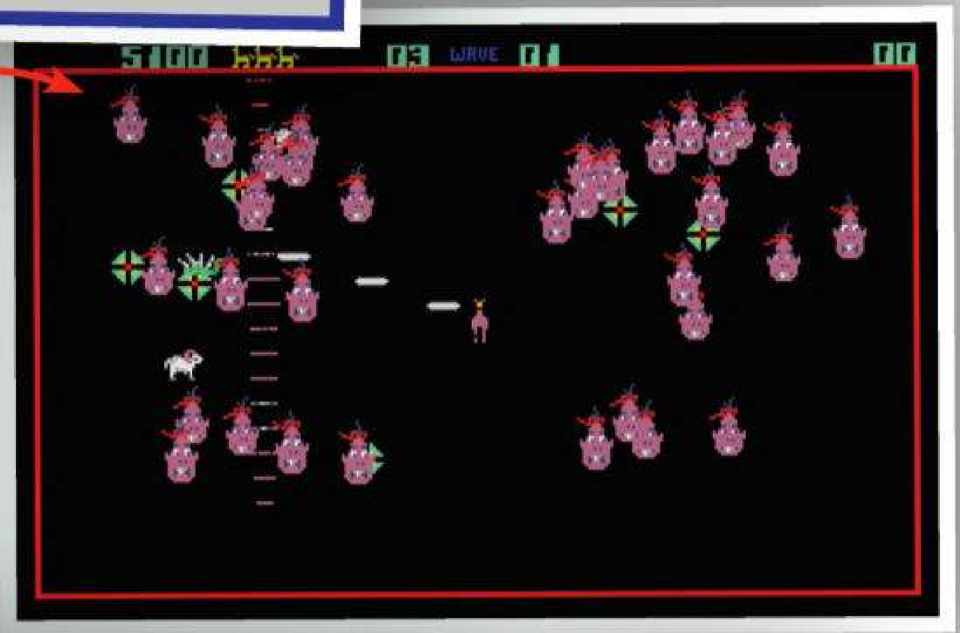
CLONE OF: FROGGER AND ALPINE SKI

■ Everyone's favourite no-necked monstrosity, Horace owed a debt to *Pac-Man* for inspiring his debut outing, *Hungry Horace*. We are highlighting the follow-up, though, as an audacious example of 'double cloning' – copying not one but two original games. There's no use making those big eyes at us, Horace. We know what you've done.









LLAMATRON (ATARI ST)

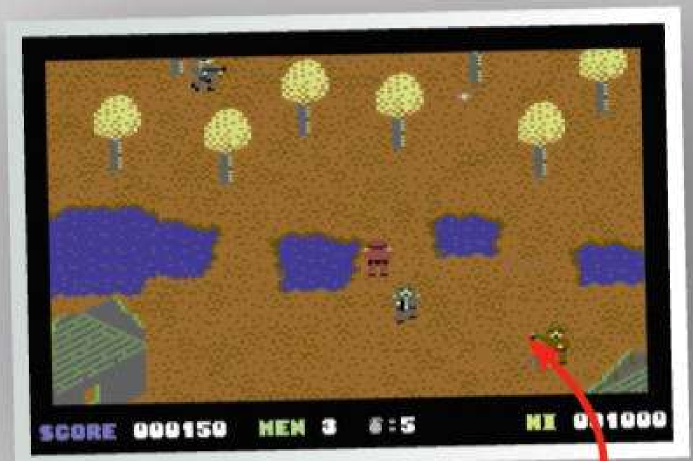
CLONE OF: ROBOTRON: 2084

■ Jeff Minter, the head honcho of Llamasoft, has spent over 40 years adding hairy, hooved beasts to famous coin-ops, notably *Centipede*, *Defender* and *Tempest*. This excellent take on Eugene Jarvis' twin-stick shooter is one of his best but we still wish he'd made a dot-eating maze game featuring a small camelid and called it *Alpaca-Man*.

MR EE! (BBC MICRO)

CLONE OF: MR DO!

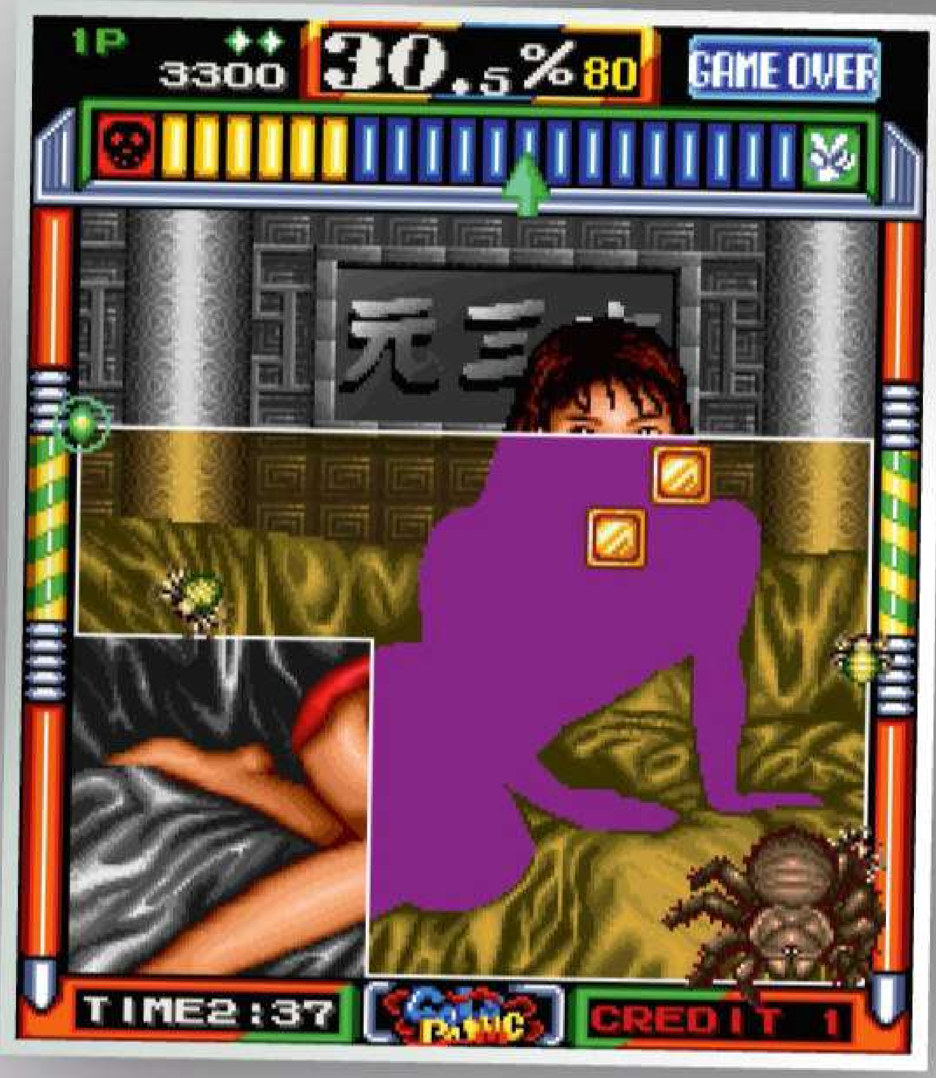
■ We could have filled this list solely with BBC Micro clones, such was the cavalier attitude of those developing for Acorn's machine to intellectual property rights. *Rocket Raid* (*Scramble*), *Dunjunz* (*Gauntlet*) and *The Great Wall* (*Hunchback*) were all great but we like this one best because we insist on pronouncing the title in a broad Yorkshire accent.

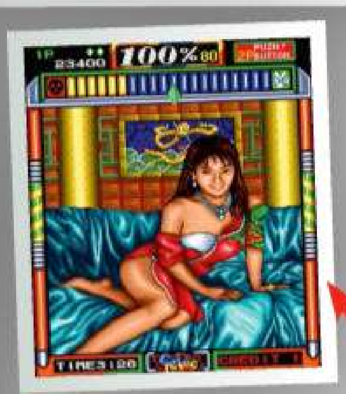


WHO DARES WINS II (C64)

CLONE OF: COMMANDO

■ When Alligata first released *Who Dares Wins*, it naturally caught the attention of Elite, which owned the official *Commando* licence for home computers, and the game was soon pulled from shelves. A few cosmetic changes and map rejiggles later and a near identical 'sequel' was on sale within the year. He who dares, Rodney!



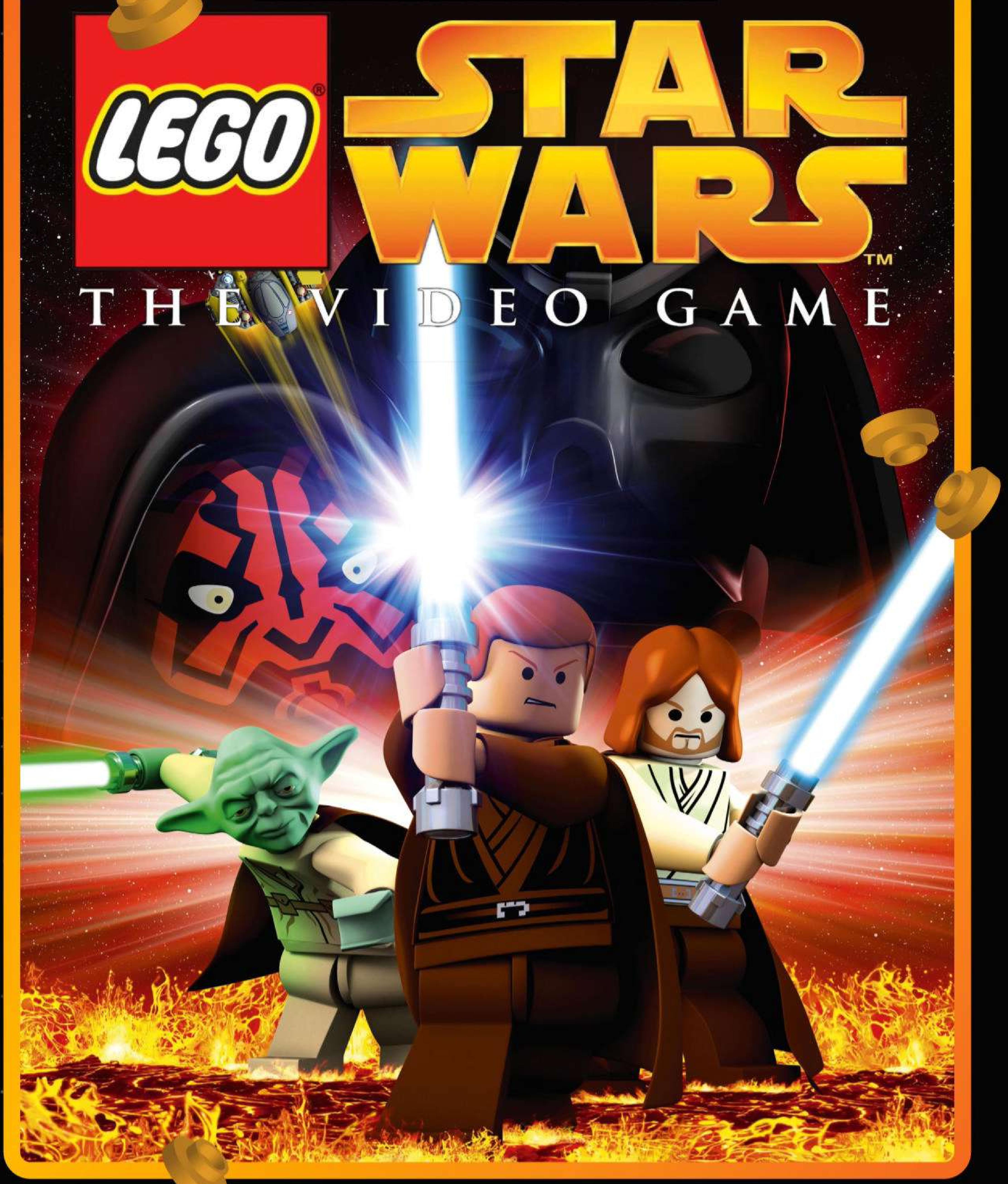


GALS PANIC (ARCADE)

CLONE OF: QIX

■ *Qix* is a strikingly abstract game concept. Presented with a pitch-black emptiness, you must carefully carve out territory, bringing light to the darkness and giving substance to the void, as geometric forms buzz and spiral in the abyss. So what do developers Kaneko decide this minimalist artwork needs? Girls with their baps out. Philistines.

THE MAKING OF


LEGO®
STAR WARS™
THE VIDEO GAME

ANAKIN SKYWALKER ONCE SAID, “THIS IS WHERE THE FUN BEGINS,” AND THAT’S CERTAINLY TRUE OF TT GAMES’ ICONIC MASHUP OF TWO VERY FAMOUS NAMES. RETRO GAMER PIECES TOGETHER HOW IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE LEGO TITLE THAT FAITHFULLY COVERED THE STAR WARS PREQUELS

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

It's fair to say there was some scepticism when news of *Lego Star Wars: The Video Game* was announced ahead of its release in 2005. Although the concept was eye-catching on paper, fans of both the world's most successful film series and the world's favourite toy weren't sure how well it would play out. Furthermore, the build could so easily have fallen apart since The Lego Group decided to pull out of the games business shortly after development began, heralding the end of Lego Interactive.

Then the pieces came together. Key management from Lego Interactive formed a new, small publishing company called Giant Interactive which immediately gained the exclusive licence for Lego-based videogames. The developer tasked with creating the *Lego Star Wars* title, Traveller's Tales, continued its work and formed a close relationship with the publisher – so much so that the studio founded in 1989 by Jon Burton and Andy Ingram would soon end up buying Giant Interactive, creating TT Games in the process.

By this time, Lego Group had formed a long and fruitful partnership with Lucasfilm. It released its first physical *Star Wars* set in 1999 – the X-wing Starfighter – and the success of this and subsequent sets led to the suggestion that a game within a *Lego Star Wars* universe would work. “From a developer perspective the conversation went like, ‘Want to make a *Lego Knights Kingdom* game?’, ‘What's Knights Kingdom?’, ‘What about a *Lego Star Wars* game instead?’, ‘Yes!’” says John Hodskinson. The next step was planning how it would turn out.

John was the lead programmer for *Lego Star Wars: The Video Game* (he's now senior advanced game designer at TT Games). From the start, he says the studio's intention was clear. “We absolutely wanted to immerse players in *Star Wars* with the music, text crawls and screen wipes in particular,” he explains. It would also be aimed at a younger audience and be family friendly. “We wanted the game to be accessible to everyone, including parents helping out their offspring,” John adds.

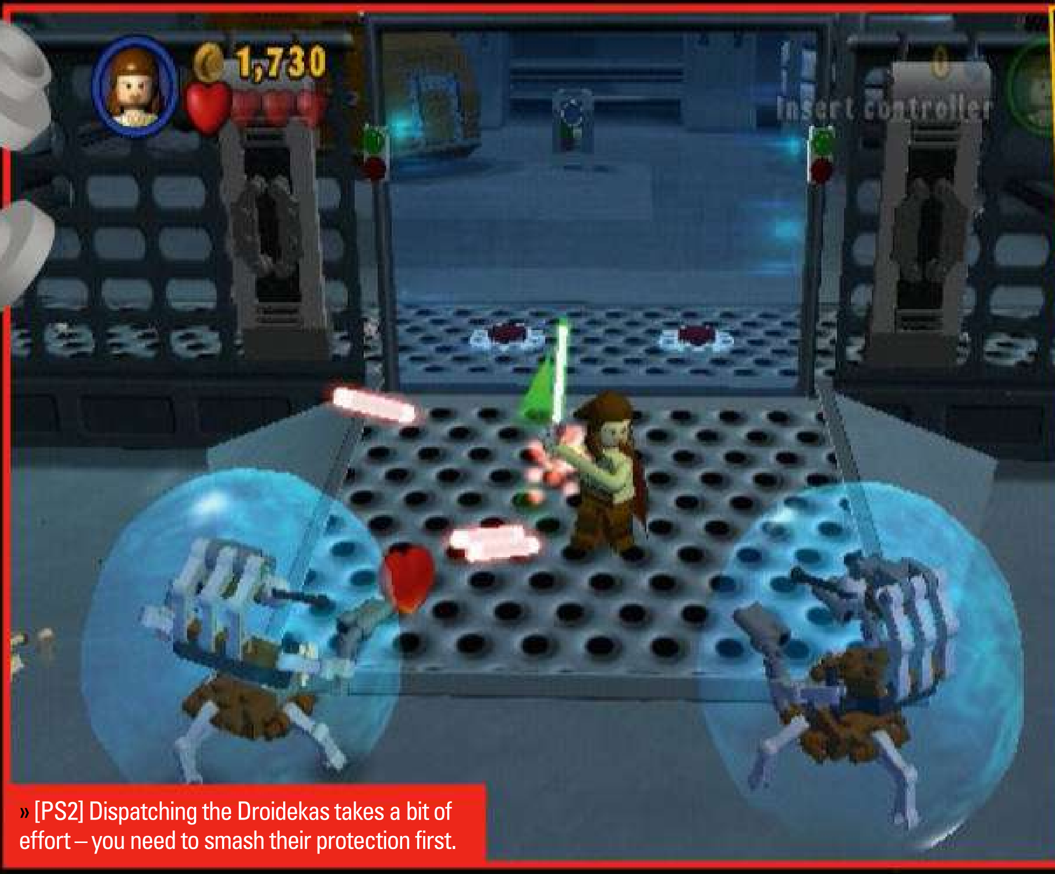
» John Hodskinson was lead programmer on *Lego Star Wars* and is currently senior advanced games designer at TT Games.

One of the early decisions was to ensure that players wouldn't die. “The ‘no die and reset’ mechanic meant continuous play for gamers,” John explains. “This helped with the feeling that gamers were playing through and immersed in a cinematic story. The penalty was just the loss of studs and, like an arcade game on free play, you could keep going seamlessly while the story unfolded – the hope was that some of that storytelling was done in gameplay, not just the cutscenes.”

> “IN SOME RESPECTS WE WERE LED BY, AND DESIGNED AROUND, THE RESTRICTIONS OF OUR TARGET PLATFORM”
> JOHN HODSKINSON

To explain, *Lego Star Wars* was a thrilling action adventure that took players on a jaunt through the three *Star Wars* prequels – that is *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace*, *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack Of The Clones* and *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge Of The Sith*. Players would assume the roles of familiar characters – unlocking more as they progressed through the levels – and they would be tasked with battling enemies (Jedi's using lightsabers, of course), solving puzzles and collecting coin-like studs that served as in-game currency.

Although the game used fixed camera angles, the environment itself was more flexible. Objects such as fences, tables and windows could be smashed and bricks could be moved using Force powers to form new items. There were also plenty of challenges to enjoy, with many drawing upon a character's



» [PS2] Dispatching the Droidekas takes a bit of effort – you need to smash their protection first.

LEGO
STAR WARS
THE VIDEO GAME

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** GIANT INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** TRAVELLER'S TALES
- » **RELEASED:** 2005
- » **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION 2, VARIOUS
- » **GENRE:** ACTION ADVENTURE

LEGO STAR WARS
THE VIDEO GAME

A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

THE LEGO STAR WARS FEATURES THAT HAVE SHAPED THE LEGO SERIES

HUMOUR

As well as enjoying the action, you'd look forward to the next well-crafted cutscene, finding yourself laughing out loud as familiar characters stumbled over blocks, failed to turn on their lightsabers in time or lit up the screen with a funny face. The end result is a story told with real humour.

CO OP PLAY

Although the game could be played alone, having a friend jump in at any time while you battled enemies, collected studs and demolished the environment made a fun game even more enjoyable. You'd each play a different character simultaneously, working together to complete each level.

PUZZLES

Aside from dealing with swarms of enemies, *Lego Star Wars* was packed with puzzles, some of them proving rather perplexing. To complete many of them, you needed to switch between characters and draw on their respective strengths. Jar Jar Binks finally proves to be useful!

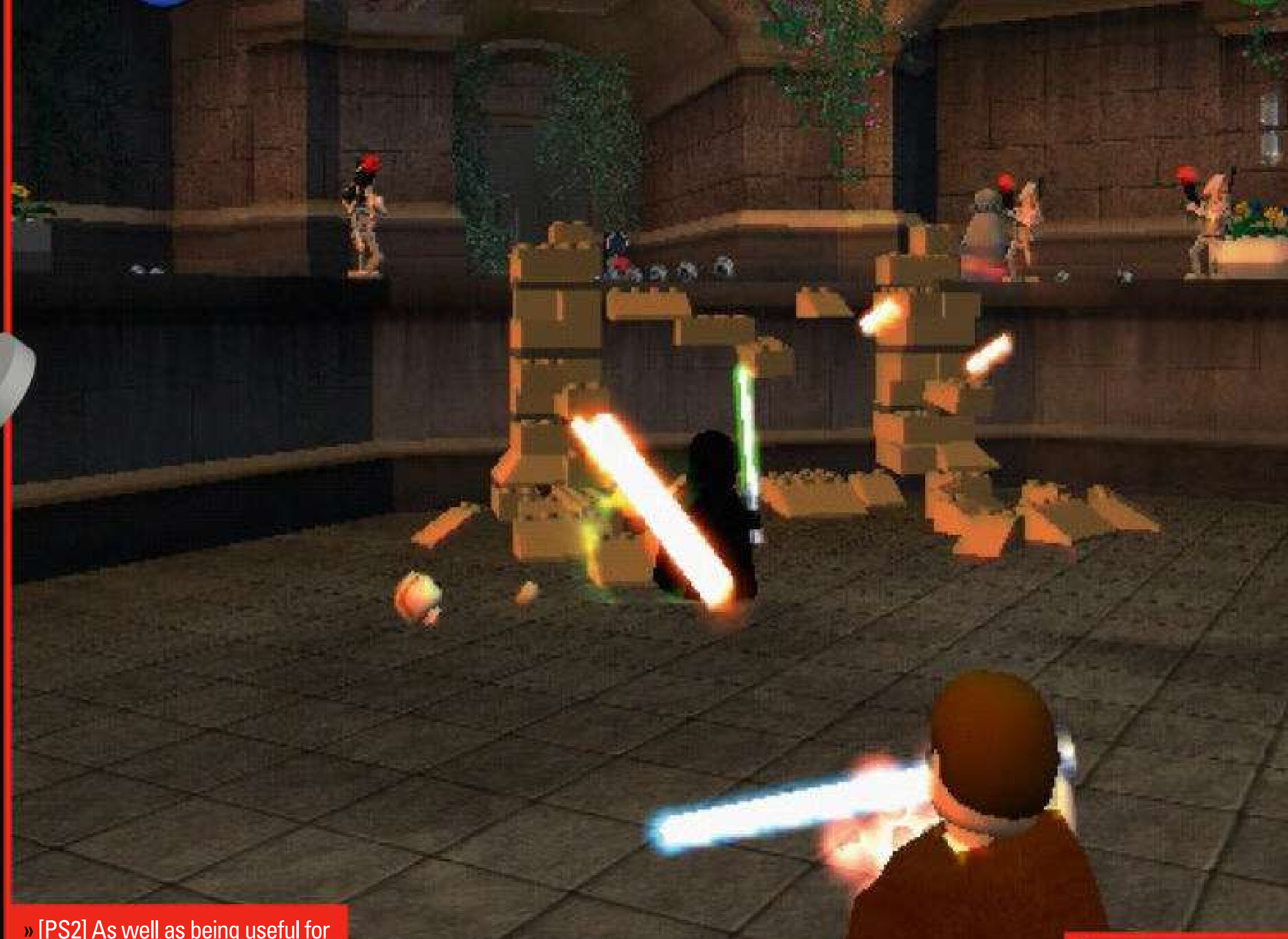
MINIGAMES

To the delight of players, the game's developer decided to mix things up a bit by throwing in some really cool minigames, most notably the thrillingly fast Mos Espa Podrace level that got progressively harder and the starfighter shooter missions, Gunship Cavalry and Battle Over Coruscant.

FAMILIARITY

REVENGE OF THE SITH
Chapter 1
BATTLE OVER CORUSCANT
The Republic is crumbling

Quite aside from the *Star Wars* title music, 56 playable characters and relative faithfulness to the *Star Wars* prequels, there was no getting away from the fact you were in a Lego-built universe. The developers took two IPs and mashed them together to near perfection.



» [PS2] As well as being useful for attacks, the lightsaber also comes in handy as a defensive tool.

> "IT WAS NEVER A GOAL TO CREATE AN ARBITRARILY HUGE ROSTER OF CHARACTERS, MORE TO GIVE PLAYERS DIFFERENT CHARACTERS TO PLAY WITH"
> JOHN HODSKINSON

particular skills, and players could not only switch between characters but team up with a friend in an amazingly fun co-op mode that allowed both gamers to play on the same screen simultaneously.

"In some respects we were led by, and designed around, the restrictions of our target platform which was PlayStation 2 in interlaced mode, so the fact that it had to target 50/60Hz is partly what led to same-screen co-op with fixed camera views and a modest density of objects, puzzles and enemies," John says. "The upshot is that the game and levels were easy for players to navigate. We also realised players could be more invested in what they're doing in the game if learning how to play was quick and easy without having to know how to move a camera manually. I think this is still true today, but more people know the language of videogames so it's less of a hurdle."

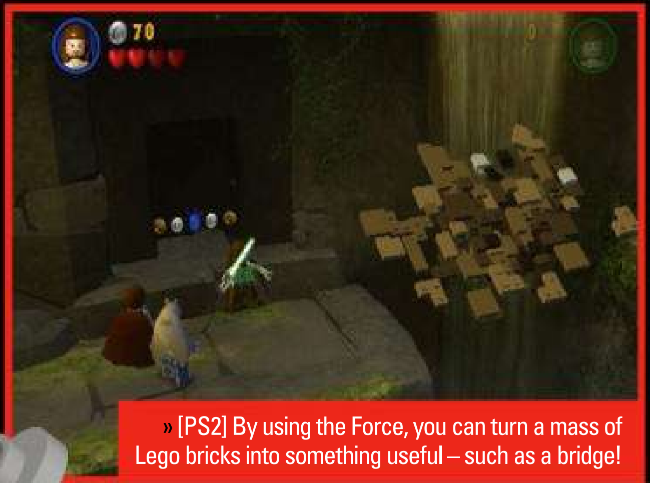
To ensure the games were largely faithful to the source material – albeit with the addition of lashings of humour (including a bit of slapstick here and there) and a few small changes such as C-3PO being met on Geonosis rather than Tatooine – the developers spent some time sitting in front of a television with a couple of DVDs. The film *The Phantom Menace* debuted in 1999 and *Attack Of The Clones* hit the big screen in 2002. *Revenge Of The Sith* was opening in cinemas on 19 May 2005 so the developers didn't get a chance to see it

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

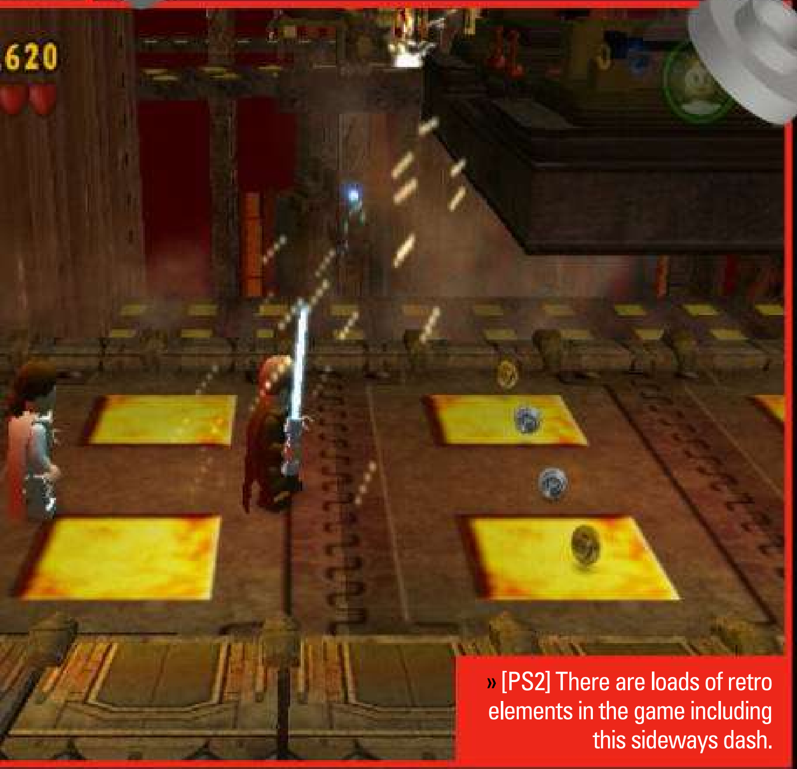
LEANDER
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST, MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1991

PUGGSY (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE, MEGA-CD
YEAR: 1993

SONIC 3D BLAST
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE, PC, SATURN
YEAR: 1996



» [PS2] By using the Force, you can turn a mass of Lego bricks into something useful – such as a bridge!



» [PS2] There are loads of retro elements in the game including this sideways dash.

during production. One of the key elements which came out of these sessions was an urge to break up the action adventure gameplay with some vehicle-based minigames. Players could engage as Anakin in a podrace to win enough money to repair his ship and, later, shoot and dodge their way around a starfighter level called Gunship Cavalry. In Battle Over Coruscant, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin sought to rescue Chancellor Palpatine by engaging in a good old shoot-'em-up.

"Aside from *Star Wars: Revenge Of The Sith*, we analysed the films and chose appropriate sequences that inspired suitable gameplay." John explains, pointing to how they went about picking out scenes from the movies. "We felt it was important to represent the vehicles of *Star Wars* with a vehicle level per episode and these were the main exceptions to the 'no die and reset' rule. They were a chance to mix up the play styles, hence the podracing sections, *Zaxxon*-style gunship run and Coruscant space battle all being rather different to each other."

The levels were accessed via a hub called Dexter's Diner that continued to populate as players progressed. You'd also find any pieced-together vehicles here, enter codes or make purchases using the accumulated studs. "Given that the coverage was the prequel trilogy, the diner seemed the closest thing to a cantina available to us," John says of the decision to create this area of the game. "We didn't want a UI-based interface for selecting levels. It needed to be a place you could practise with the controls. So we tried to give it some charm in Lego form with Dexter acting as shopkeeper for you to spend your studs, an exterior space to view minikits, and the ability to start fights. So it might be a tiny little open-world hub but it's a fun, reactive one."

The hub was a player's first taste of the game and it introduced the art style that would make *Lego Star Wars* stand out. James Cunliffe was the game's lead artist, with Jeremy Pardon on board as lead animator. James and John worked on the design with James Kay, Glynn Scragg and Jon Burton and they were not only inspired by Lego and *Star Wars*, they also took inspiration from past games too.

"We knew we couldn't achieve realism on the PlayStation 2, and the original film trilogy has quite the smorgasboard of stylised locations, so we tried to recreate the feel and stylings of those places rather than recreating totally accurate replications," John says. "There were also a number of influences from elsewhere such as the blob shadows under the feet that were inspired by *The Legend Of Zelda* and helped with performance. The same applied to animation – the characters you control aren't toys, they are a real Jedi, scoundrel, droid and whatever else that just happen to be Lego and just happen to be in a videogame, and just happen to be unable to talk. But they don't know that."

The decision not to give the characters a voice was entirely deliberate and it extended beyond the levels into the cutscenes, each of which provided continuity while fleshing out the story and setting up the different situations. "We decided early on to use silent comedy and visual storytelling – something a few of us had wanted to do for a while – and we thought we could accomplish this when applied to something as well-known as *Star Wars*," John says."But that meant there couldn't be any exposition, so things were naturally simplified with no chance of explaining the whys and wherefores.

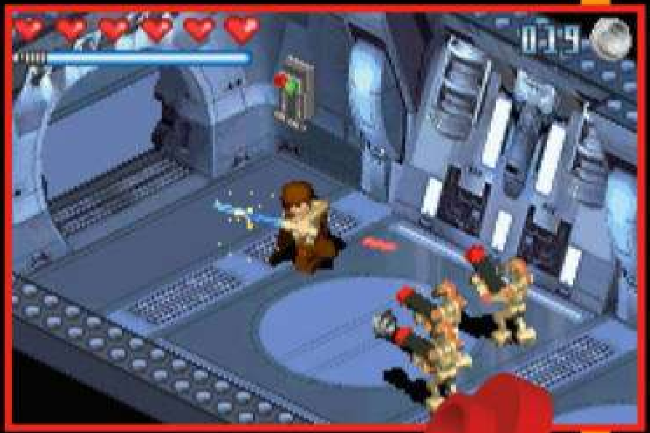
"It had to be a fast-track to setting up the gameplay action, but still nail iconic moments, before finishing with a 'call to action' for the next gameplay sequence. The fixed (but varied) camera angles also helped with this, as the player might have otherwise been confused where to go. We tried not to break camera rules when wiping the screen between sections, so the players didn't get disorientated, which also helped maintain continuity." Even so, John says the gameplay ▶

STAR WARS REIMAGINED

THE GAME BOY ADVANCE VERSION IS FAR, FAR FROM A PORT

■ If you were only familiar with the excellent Game Boy Advance version of *Lego Star Wars* then the screenshots dotted around these pages may look rather alien to you. Then again, there's a stark reason for that. The GBA version was created by Griptonite Games rather than Traveller's Tales and it largely trod its own path, bearing in mind the different approach needed to create such a title on a smaller screen.

The first thing you'll notice are the cutscenes – or rather the lack of them, given the GBA version makes use of still images rather than cute animations. You'll then see that Dexter's Diner has been axed, with levels selected via a menu instead. What's more, it's a shorter game. You'll find just 14 levels here: five making up *Episode I*, three forming *Episode II* and a further six comprising *Episode III*. All are played from an isometric viewpoint – again, a departure from the other versions. Get stuck into the game and the differences keep coming. Aside from only enjoying the game as a single-player quest, you'll discover most of the characters have a second ability. You can still switch between characters to resolve puzzles but you'll find there are fewer playable ones. The bosses are generally defeated through perseverance too. And yet it all makes for a unique title, enhanced by the availability of useful cheat codes. You'll definitely feel the force with this one.



BUILDING A FUTURE HOW THE LEGO SERIES HAS EVOLVED

LEGO STAR WARS II THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

As well as being able to ride creatures and use character-specific attacks, the sequel to *Lego Star Wars* allowed you to customise a Lego minifigure for the first time. In choosing parts of characters, there were many combinations to create.

LEGO STAR WARS III THE CLONE WARS

For this game, the developers drew on the real-time strategy genre and it meant you could control clone trooper battalions and build bases while calling in reinforcements. While simple compared to full-blown RTS games, you could still engage in combat across huge battlefields.

LEGO BATMAN 2 DC SUPER HEROES

Of course, the *Lego* series has not been solely based around the *Star Wars* franchise. Games have also been based on *Indiana Jones*, *Harry Potter* and more. Here, DC superheroes star, complete with full voice acting rather than a simple reliance on visual humour.

LEGO THE LORD OF THE RINGS

This game also lent a voice to the plastic minifigures but it did so by making use of audio from the classic movie trilogy. It meant you could enjoy key lines from the films and that, in a certain sense, made it more faithful to the source material than any other *Lego* title.

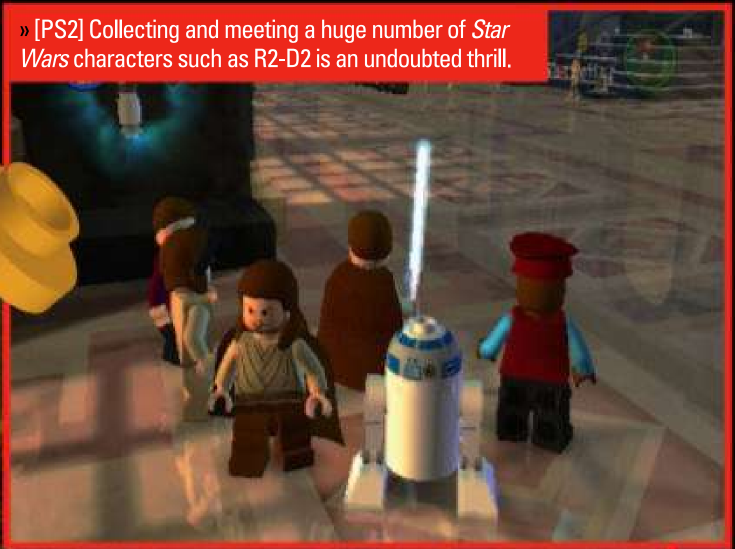
objectives were sometimes arbitrary. "Destroy this many droids before you can rescue Padmé for example," he says, referring to the Jedi Battle (chapter four of *Episode II*) in which players were told, for example, to target two Droidekas and five Super Battle Droids. "So it's not necessarily the perfect union of story and gameplay but we figured our intended audience could work around that if they understood what was required of them."

If nothing else, it added variety and kept interest high. Defeating those enemies was consistent too – nobody lay dying in a pool of blood but, far more cutely, ended up being smashed into a pile of bricks. It retained the family friendly vibe while also proving to be a heap of fun for adults too. There was a clear affection for *Star Wars* throughout the game and it was hard not to get caught up in it.

Having a large roster of characters helped enormously – and yes, if you got to chapter six of *Episode III*, Darth Vader was waiting as the final boss. Just prior to that, you could unlock and play as Yoda – tot them all up and you had 57 playable characters overall, each one clearly a Lego minifigure in digital form. Unlocking and collecting them added another fun element.

"Although it ballooned over the years, it was never a goal to create an arbitrarily huge roster of characters, more to give players different characters to play with," John admits. "This especially applied to Free Play mode which allowed you to mix up who you played in recreations of classic scenes – it was important to us that you could fight General Grievous as two other General Grievouses, for example.

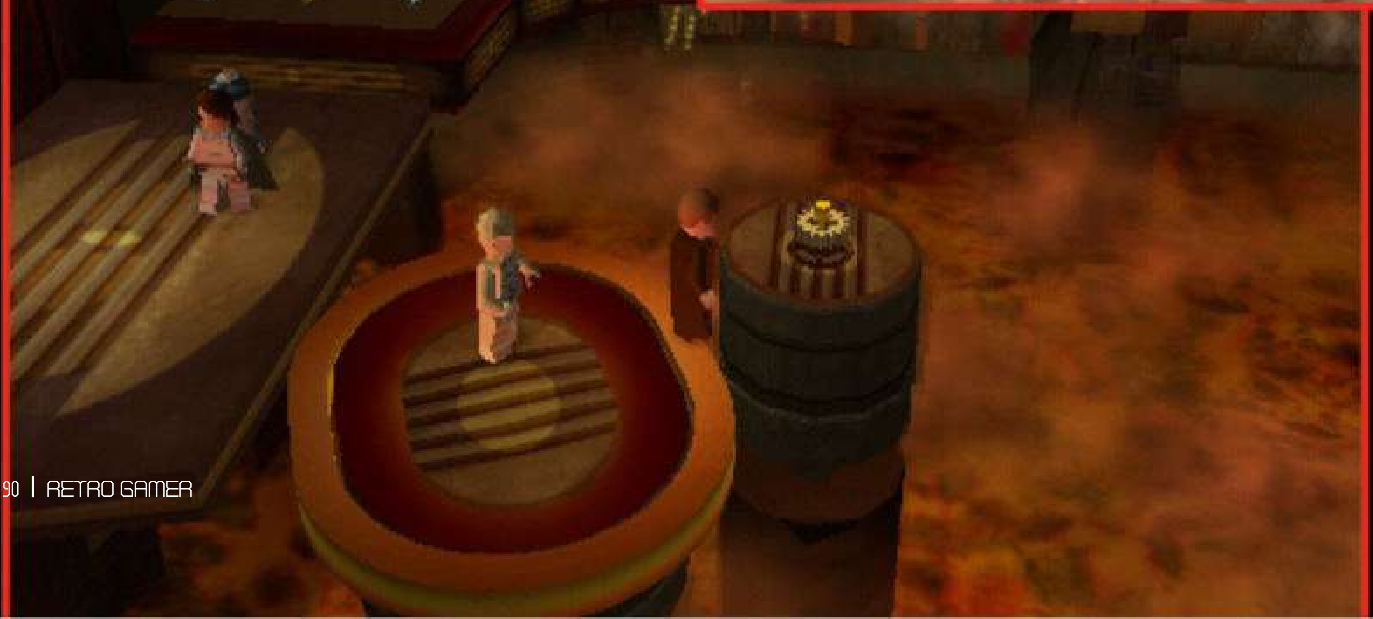
"It comes back to the kind of things children could do with physical Lego where their imaginations are in charge and they can make anything they want to happen. It was about feeding that sense of play, slackening the rules of story integrity. In fact, that's why Free Play didn't show the cutscenes, and partly why the levels weren't too long: we wanted players to want to jump straight back in and play again, but in a different way."



» [PS2] Collecting and meeting a huge number of *Star Wars* characters such as R2-D2 is an undoubted thrill.

Of course, as with most games, things could also have worked out differently. *Lego Star Wars* took two years to develop and, in that time, ideas came and went – some of which were more advanced than others. "We had a prototype Varactyl test, a half-baked Zam Wesell chase, and an attempt at Anakin's inadvertent assault on the Droid Control Ship," John says.

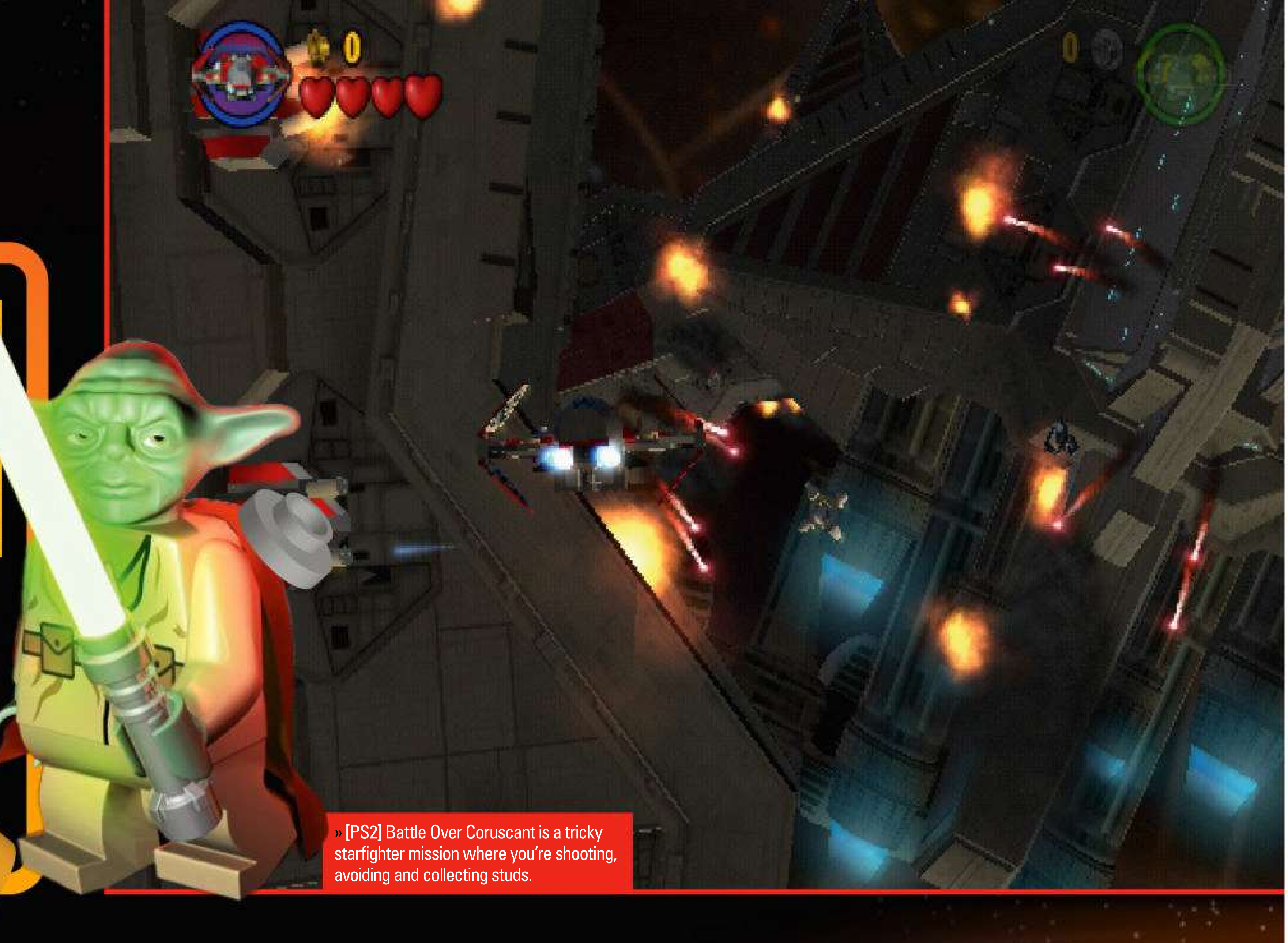
The latter two ended up in *Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga*, a 2007 release which combined *Lego Star Wars: The Video Game* with its sequel, *Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy* (the latter based on the movies that were released in 1977, 1980 and 1983). Incidentally, bomb dragging was introduced to Gunship Cavalry for this combo-release. "It was an attempt to be more engaging in terms of mechanics but we fell into the trap of adding it for the sake of it and making it less fun. So, you live and learn," John laments.



» [PS2] Like a good old-fashioned platformer, you need to work out ways of crossing dangerous terrain.

LEGO CITY UNDERCOVER

Rather than draw upon the movies, TT Games looked inwards and the result was a title based on the popular Lego City brand. Beginning life as a Wii U exclusive, it's often been compared to *Grand Theft Auto* due to its fun open-world approach.



» [PS2] Battle Over Coruscant is a tricky starfighter mission where you're shooting, avoiding and collecting studs.

There were other omissions in *Lego Star Wars*. "We didn't ever have creatures in the Petranaki arena – that would have been cool, but we wanted to keep the focus on the battle for story reasons," John says. "And some now long-standing features weren't added until the second game, such as riding creatures and getting in vehicles, melee (punching enemies or objects) and even 'build-its' – in the first game all building was done by the Jedi transforming one object into another."

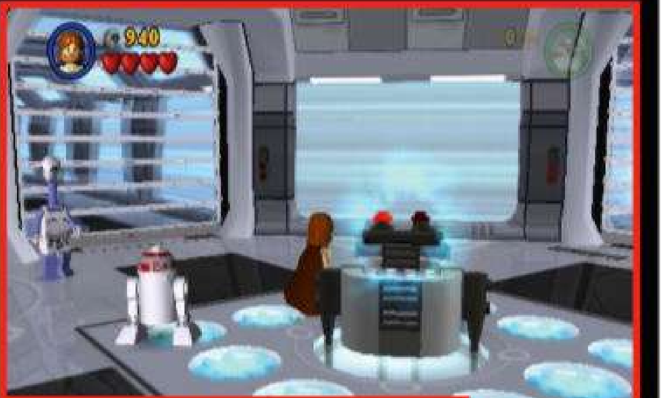
> "WE DECIDED EARLY ON TO USE SILENT COMEDY AND VISUAL STORYTELLING – SOMETHING A FEW OF US HAD WANTED TO DO FOR A WHILE"
> **JOHN HODSKINSON**

Yet what the debut *Lego Star Wars* game did was set out the stall for the many other *Lego* videogames since created by TT Games. "Internally, I've always said *Lego Star Wars* was more than the sum of its parts," John says. "The two-player component was critical, especially the drop-in/drop-out aspect which wasn't common at the time. And we felt the game had to have arcade-like simplicity.

"The collectibles, smashables, character abilities and even the size of the levels all contribute to the feeling that you're 'playing with Lego' even if you're not building with individual bricks. That's a crucial distinction – you can have an action adventure that still feels like it has Lego construction, without being fiddly and time consuming, taking away from the storytelling."

That feeling of playing with Lego extends to the game's stud collecting as well. "Even picking up studs contributes to that by being satisfying in itself, as we added meaning to it by adding things to spend them on and adding to the progress bar to obtain True Jedi status," continues John. "The penalty for the loss of studs is so light that the focus remains more on incentivising you to keep hold of your studs, and by extension this rewards experimentation – so the game encourages players to go ahead, jump off that cliff, at least it's funny.

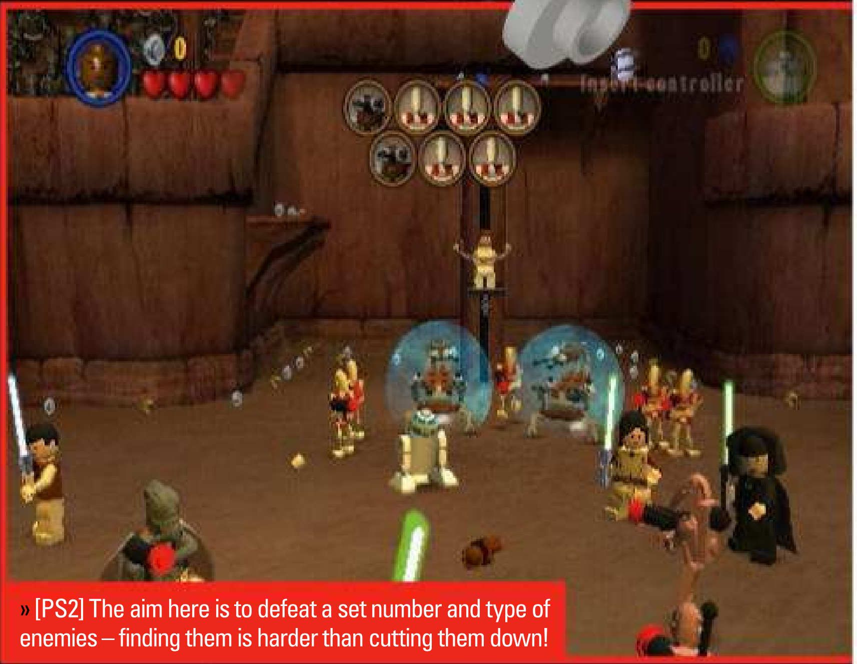
"The game becomes more a case of everything working together in balance, and it was figured out organically during development between the whole team. Finally, the *Star Wars* story is what gets people's attention in the first place, but then hopefully they stick around and ultimately recommend it to friends because of the easy-going gameplay and affectionate parody."



» [PS2] Some parts of the game can have you running around in circles – literally in this case!

To the team's great delight, the game went down well. Released on Xbox, GameCube, PC and Mac as well as PlayStation 2, it's said to have sold 6.7 million units worldwide. It was critically well-rece=ived. "We were thrilled with the general reception and the commercial success that followed," says John. "We made the game at least I had always wanted to make, and *Star Wars* afforded us that luxury." He said risks were taken, particularly regarding the lack of lives and continues, but reckons the right decisions were made, including the short levels.

"Everyone could get through it, which is more valuable to me in a family friendly game than providing challenges predicated on repetition," he adds. "Other games and genres do that perfectly well and it would be wrong to try and imitate them – there's room for all of us!" ✱



» [PS2] The aim here is to defeat a set number and type of enemies – finding them is harder than cutting them down!

The Legend Of Zelda: The Minish Cap

SHRUNK TO PERFECTION

» GAME BOY ADVANCE » 2004 » CAPCOM/FLAGSHIP

As much as I enjoyed playing *A Link To The Past* on my Game Boy Advance, it wasn't a new *Zelda* adventure. Granted, it came with the delightful *Four Swords*, but as entertaining as that was, it still felt like a glorified sidequest, something to do when you wanted a break from Link's main adventure.

Four Swords was clearly popular, because *The Minish Cap* continued and greatly expanded its story, taking place before the events of *Four Swords* and explaining the origins of its antagonist, the evil sorcerer Vaati. It also builds on *Four Swords*' Gnat Hat, a magical device that could shrink you in size.

The magical cap you discover in *The Minish cap* is no ordinary piece of headwear, it's actually a sentient being called Ezlo, with an interesting backstory that I won't spoil here. Suffice to say, in addition to being pivotal to *The Minish Cap*'s story, Ezlo can also dole out helpful advice and (like the Gnat Hat), can shrink you down in size. This shrinking ability is the main gameplay mechanic of *The Minish Cap*, allowing you to explore otherwise inaccessible places (all scaled to perfection with giant acorns and similar environmental details), and interact with the Picori, a tiny race of beings that live alongside the Hylians.

The ability to shrink Link down in size isn't the only trick *The Minish Cap* has in its arsenal. It also introduces several new items like the Mole Mitts which enable Link to dig through the earth, as well as Kinstones, colourful ceramic stones that grant access to rupees, hearts and even sidequests when they're eventually assembled.

While *The Minish Cap* constantly goes out of its way to stress just how small Link is as he interacts with the Picori or investigates numerous dungeons, it can't hide the sheer epic scale of Link's GBA adventure. In fact, I'd argue that it's the last great proper portable quest that Link has had (Switch games don't count). If you can stomach the eye-watering price it now goes for you'll discover one of the franchise's best games. *

R
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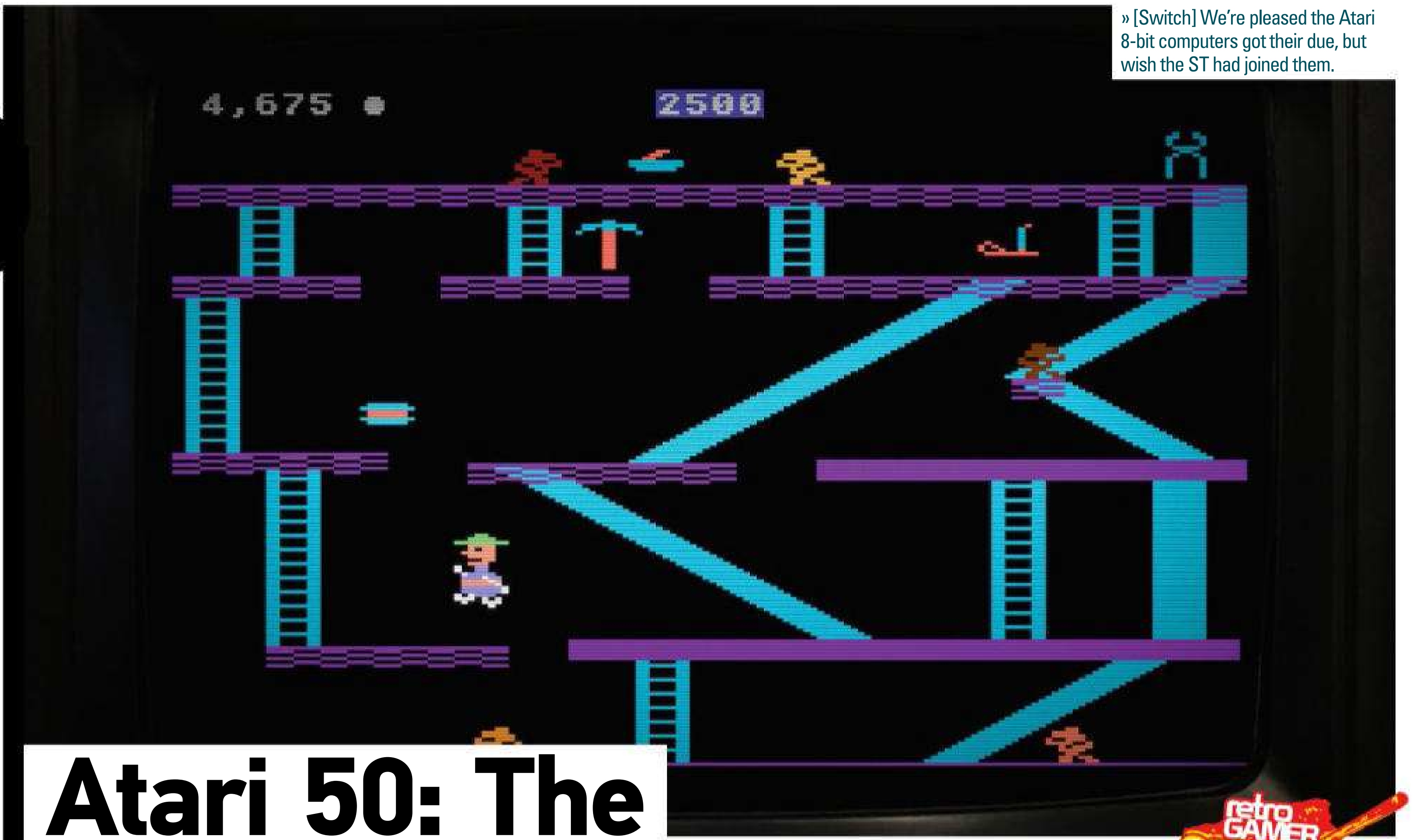
» We kick things off with a look at Digital Eclipse's new compilation, discover how Sonic's latest adventure fares and learn the history behind Capcom's early Resident Evil games



» [Switch] We're pleased the Atari 8-bit computers got their due, but wish the ST had joined them.

Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY, GOLDEN CELEBRATION

INFORMATION

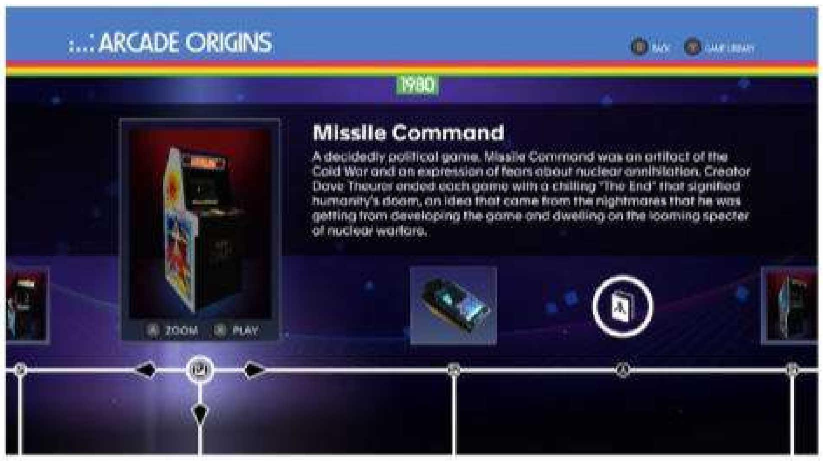
- **FORMAT REVIEWED:** SWITCH
- **ALSO ON:** PS4, PS5, XBOX ONE, XBOX SERIES X/S, PC
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £35.99
- **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4

For all of the ups and downs that the Atari brand has experienced over the past five decades, its legacy is undeniable. It's the name behind many of the innovations that went into spawning the videogames business, and one attached to many fine games, but it has also been attached to controversies and colossal stinkers. There's no question that it deserves celebrating but it's a daunting task to tackle, and we've really got to take our hats off to Digital Eclipse – this is an excellent compilation that celebrates Atari's successes and doesn't shy away from its failures.

The genius of *Atari 50* is that it doesn't just go big on museum content, it mixes it with the games. There's a simple game-selection menu if you want it, but by far the best way to experience *Atari 50* is to follow its interactive timeline, watching the video interviews and reading the stories to get a sense of how each game fits into the Atari story. Every part of it is wonderfully produced and it's easy to navigate, and it's easy to find yourself stopping to admire a particularly beautiful flyer or piece of artwork. It doesn't feel like you're choosing items from a menu so much as browsing an expertly curated museum exhibit, and we hope that future retro compilations will adopt this approach.

In some ways, the list of games is almost a secondary concern. However, you get plenty of genuine greats including *Asteroids*, *Centipede*, *Missile Command*, *Star Raiders*, *Tempest 2000* and

» [Switch] The timeline structure is superb, and really helps you to appreciate each game.



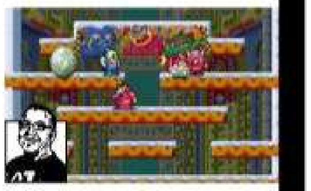
Missile Command

A decidedly political game, Missile Command was an artifact of the Cold War and an expression of fears about nuclear annihilation. Creator Dave Theurer ended each game with a chilling "The End" that signified humanity's doom, an idea that came from the nightmares that he was getting from developing the game and dwelling on the looming specter of nuclear warfare.

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Atari 50* is the latest retro compilation from emulation experts Digital Eclipse, and features over 100 games from the arcade, Atari 8-bit computers, Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Atari 7800, Lynx and Jaguar. It also includes interview content from developers including Howard Scott Warshaw, David Crane, Eugene Jarvis and plenty more.

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

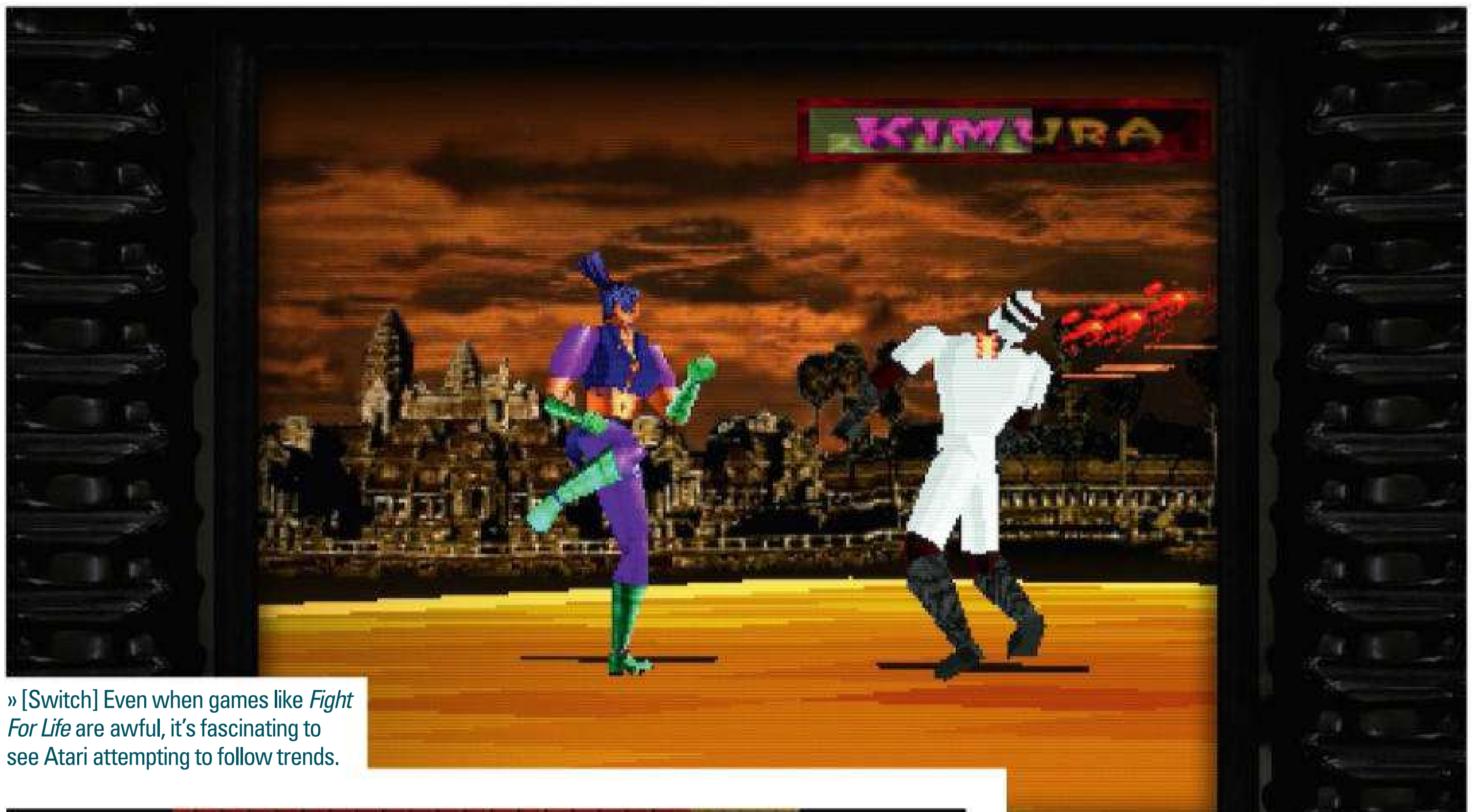
Evercade: Toaplan Arcade 1

It arrived a little too late to review (like the Evercade EXP) but an early play suggests this is another solid collection.

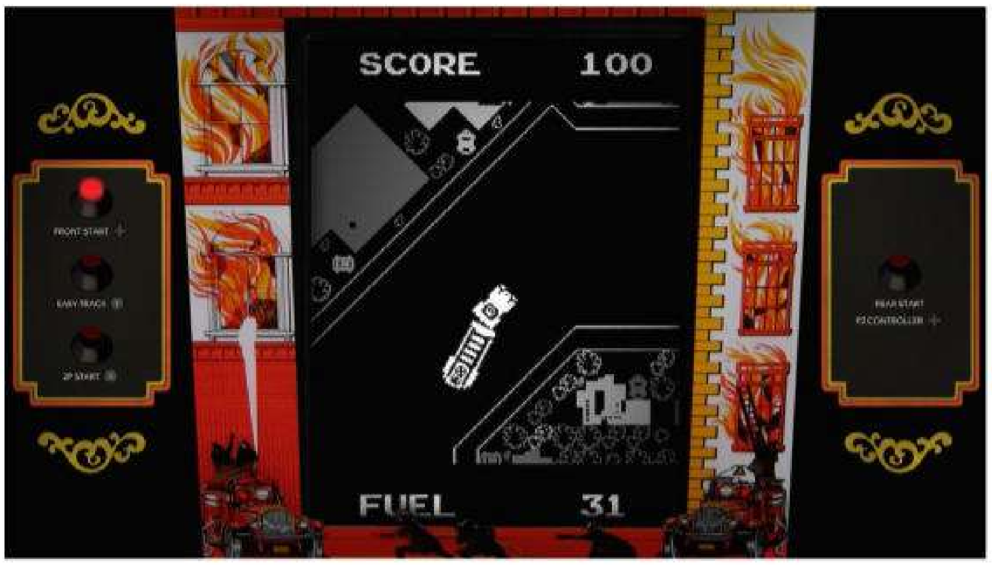
NICK

Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration

It couldn't be anything else, this is the best compilation in ages and really shows how they should be done.



» [Switch] Even when games like *Fight For Life* are awful, it's fascinating to see Atari attempting to follow trends.



» [Switch] We love the simulation of the lights on the arcade cabinet, on either side of the screen

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

ARCADE SMASH HITS

▼ SOMETHING NEW

SNK 40TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

Warlords. You'll also find that there's plenty to enjoy about games like *I, Robot* and *Dark Chambers*, which aren't as widely celebrated, and get the chance to play unreleased prototypes like *Akka Arrh*. Each game is emulated with care and attention, particularly when it comes to the control system – paddle games like *Breakout* allow you to slide your finger along the touchscreen rather than using the analogue stick.

It's fair to say that the Atari 2600 games in particular may be a tad too simplistic for many, and with over 100 games there are also a good number of duds in the selection. But the presentation often elevates the content just by contextualising its place in Atari's history. For example, *Fight For Life* is an awful fighting game, but knowing that it is the final game Atari ever developed and released for its last console helps you appreciate why it is here. Plus, it's always nice to get the chance to play a rare game that has never been officially reissued before.

The modern Atari Reimagined games are a real highlight of the package, and could well have stood alone as downloadable games in their own right. We particularly liked *VCTR-SCTR*, which combines elements of vector games including *Asteroids*, *Lunar Lander* and *Tempest* – it's a fun mash-up that really emphasises the beauty of those displays. *Yars' Revenge Enhanced* and *Neo Breakout* also stand out as being particularly enjoyable, with the latter also being one of the games that allows you to unlock extra games via in-game actions.

The thorniest issue is really what *isn't* included. Atari's messy business history means that the coin-ops created by Atari Games aren't present – that means no *Marble Madness*, *Gauntlet* or *STUN Runner*. The Atari ST doesn't have any representation at all, and the compilation is also missing plenty of defining Lynx games such as *California Games*, *Chip's Challenge* and the various arcade conversions. While we recognise the legal and budgetary factors preventing the inclusion of these games, the omissions may be too much for some to swallow.

While it's easy to imagine what *Atari 50* could have been in an ideal world, it's hard to imagine a way that Digital Eclipse could have meaningfully improved upon it in the real world. It's no exaggeration to say that *Atari 50* sets the standard that the presentation of every single retro compilation will be judged against from now on, and even with the compromises that have had to be made, it's a genuinely stellar piece of work. ✱

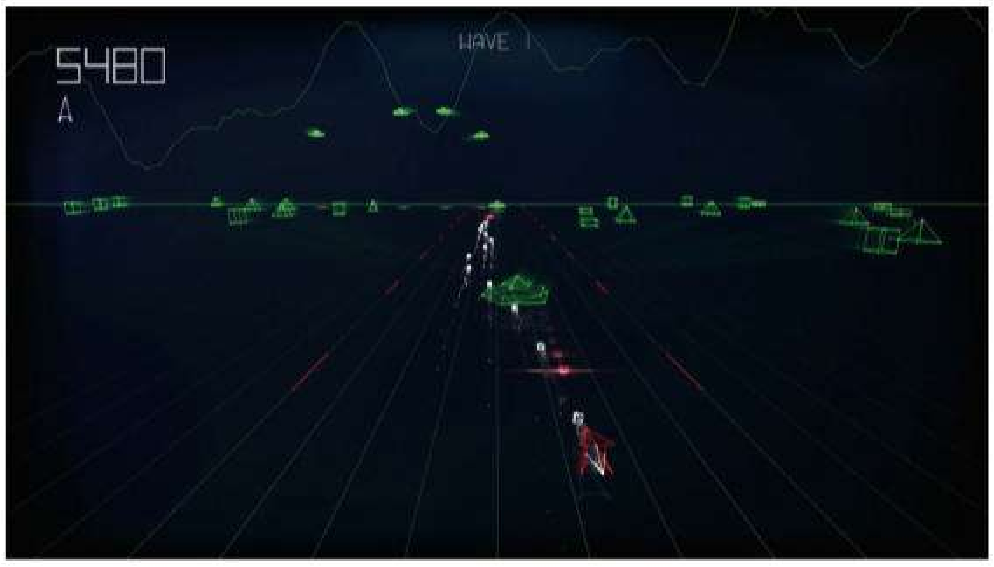
In a nutshell

***Atari 50* is the closest thing you'll get to an Atari museum in a box, and is as enjoyable to watch and read as it is to play.**

>> Score **90%**

» [Switch] There's some great video interview content spread throughout the collection, which we really appreciate.

» [Switch] *Akka Arrh* is a really interesting inclusion, and one of a few prototypes featured in Digital Eclipse's compilation.



» [Switch] *VCTR-SCTR* looks absolutely beautiful in action, and offers a fair old challenge to boot.

RETRO ROUNDUP

WE LOOK AT THE LATEST RETRO-RELATED RELEASES

✱ PICK OF THE MONTH

RepliCade X: Missile Command

» Buy it for: $159.99+ **» Buy it from:** newwavetoys.com

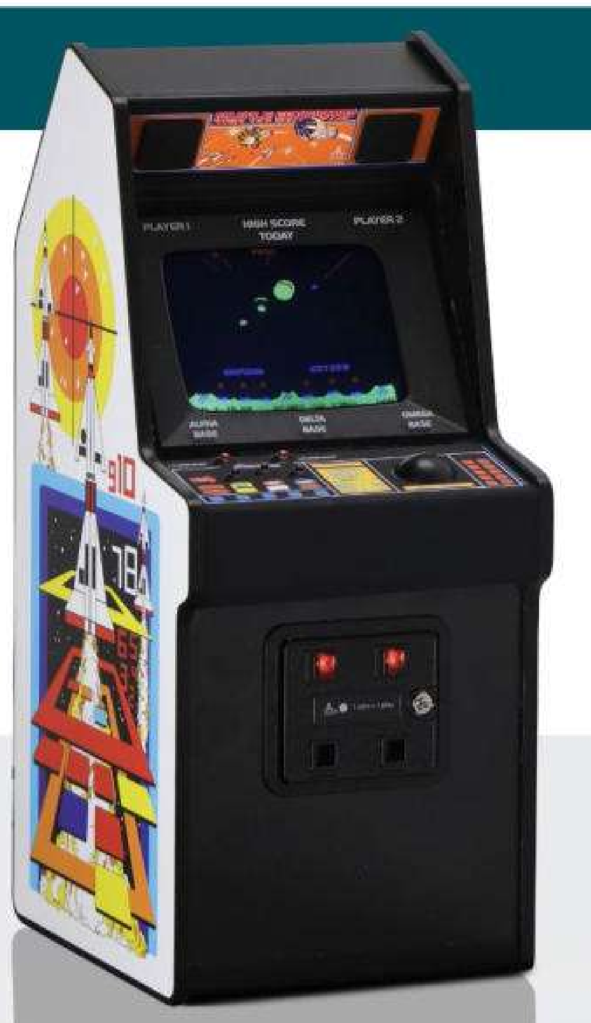
One thing we love about New Wave Toys is the attention to detail its RepliCade X miniature arcade cabinets offer. Over the past few years it has released machines based on a number of classic arcade games, from *Dragon's Lair* and *Tempest* to *Q*bert* and *Street Fighter II* and its latest is one of its most ambitious offerings yet.

For $159.99 (or $179.99 if you'd prefer the more glamorous *Field-Test Edition*), you can purchase a replica of Atari's iconic *Missile Command*. It's certainly not cheap (particularly when you factor in shipping and potential custom charges) but it's easy to see where all your cash will be going, as this is one gorgeous-looking machine.

Everything appears to be perfectly replicated, right down to the eye-catching art and marquee and it has a surprising amount of heft, as you'd expect from something made with real wood. Hell, even the outer packing is impressive, being a replica shipping box. There's a supplied Micro USB cable, a power switch, volume control and, like the Quarter Arcades cabinets, it includes a built-in battery. There's no HDMI connection though, so you won't be able to link it up to a TV.

Emulation seems excellent, with the game playing just as we remember, while the LCD screen does a great job of emulating a CRT. Sadly, the included Trak-Ball XL, while fairly decent, isn't as accurate as we'd like and precise movement can be quite tricky, particularly when you get past the first few stages. It does get easier with practice, and adjusting the sensitivity in the options certainly helps, but it does lack the precision of the coin-op's trackball.

That lack of precision will no doubt make or break a purchase for many, but if you do have deep enough pockets and don't mind putting a lot of practise in, you'll discover a beautiful-looking cab that doesn't play quite as nicely as it looks.



» The first coin slot adds credits while the second accesses various options, including adjusting the difficulty and screen brightness.

Sonic Frontiers

» System: PS5 (tested), PS4, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, Switch, PC **» Buy it for:** £49.99
» Buy it from: Retail, online

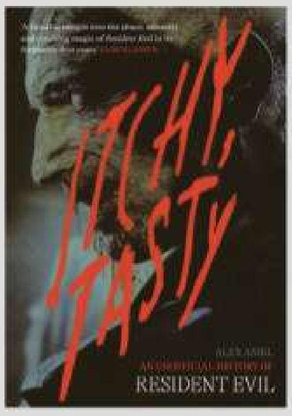
Sonic has been placed into an open world for the first time, and the results are uneven. The maps are blighted by pop-in and messy designs featuring one-way obstacles, but completing challenges to map them out proves to be compulsive once you understand their flow. The high-speed platform stages don't handle brilliantly and rely on recycled designs from past games, but the new focus on combat pays off in the form of some thrilling battles. Ultimately, it offers plenty of frustrations and deviates significantly from the traditional *Sonic* template, but it's longer, tougher and far more interesting than *Sonic Forces* was.

NICK THORPE

>> Score **60%**

Itch, Tasty: An Unofficial History Of Resident Evil

» Buy it for: £18.99 **» Buy it from:** unbound.com



Fans of *Resident Evil* would be wise to pick up Alex Aniel's excellent new tome about Capcom's popular horror series. While it's not quite as definitive as the back cover claims – it only covers events up to 2006, concluding the story when *Resident Evil*'s original creators left the series – it's the only real disappointment we had. Years of research and the opportunity to interview key figures, including Shinji Mikami, Yoshiki Okamoto and Tokuro Fujiwara has allowed Alex to really delve into the guts of Capcom's long-running series and the end result is a book that's filled with surprising revelations and interesting anecdotes. Alex's love and respect for the subject matter is obvious throughout and it's written in an engaging style that keeps you invested in the franchise's many twists and turns. An essential read for horror and Capcom fans alike.

DARRAN JONES

The Rumble Fish 2

» System: Switch (tested), PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, PC **» Buy it for:** £26.99
» Buy it from: Online

This 2005 arcade fighting game by Dimps is finally receiving its first home port. The basic fighting is satisfying and offers plenty of mechanical depth, with the most notable feature being the individual gauges for offensive and defensive moves. The use of multi-segmented sprites to achieve smoother motion gives the game a unique look which still holds up very well today. As well as Arcade mode, online play with rollback netcode has been added, as well as Survival, Time Attack and Training modes. Unfortunately three of the game's 16 characters are only available as DLC, costing £3.59 each, which strikes us as stingy given the initial asking price.

NICK THORPE

>> Score **79%**

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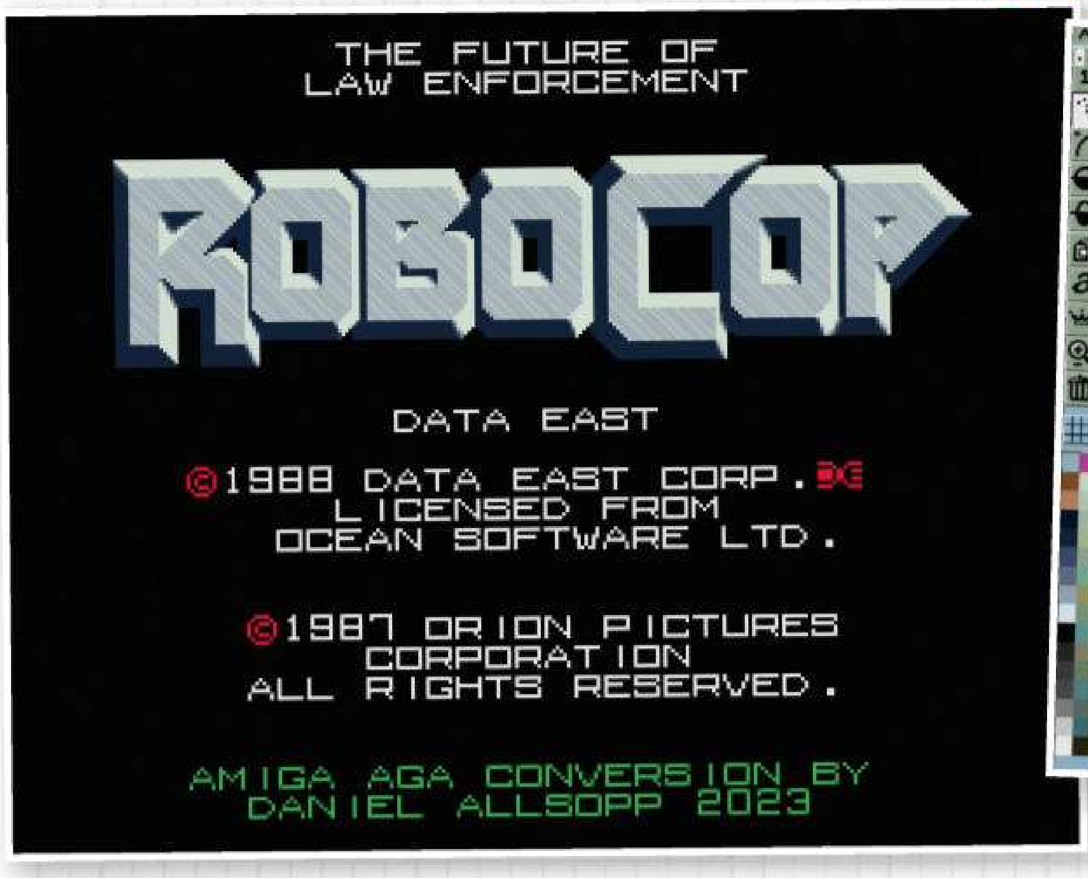
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>



THE FUTURE OF
LAW ENFORCEMENT

ROBOCOP

DATA EAST

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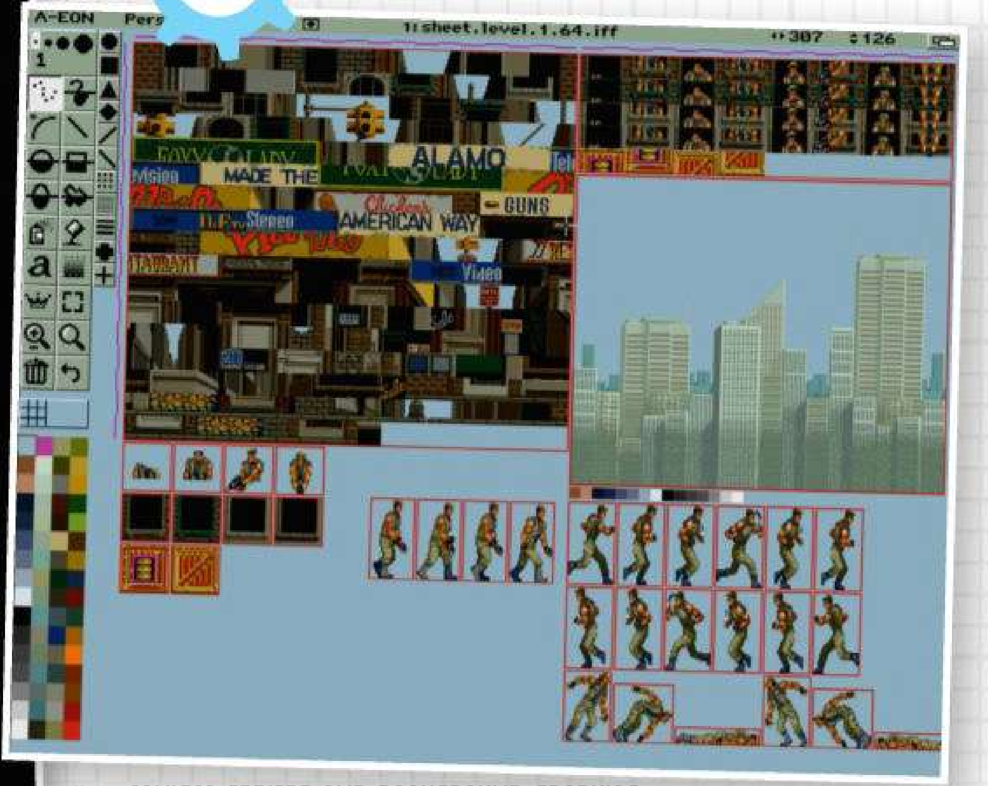
AMIGA AGA CONVERSION BY
DANIEL ALLSOPP 2023



<!--- [AMIGA] SPRITES AND BACKGROUND GRAPHICS ARE BEING DEVELOPED IN PROFESSIONAL PAINT. --->

<INTRO> IT'S BEEN ANOTHER BUSY MONTH FOR CODING COMPETITIONS. VOTING TOOK PLACE IN THE CPCDEV 2022 AND NESDEV (ITCH.IO/JAM/NESDEV-2022), AND THE AMIGA BLITZ BASIC JAM (ITCH.IO/JAM/ABBGJAM) ALSO ENDED. WE ARE NOW LOOKING FORWARD TO AMIGA GAME JAM 2023, WITH ITS SWORD-AND-SORCERY THEME AND THE ANNUAL SMS POWER COMPETITION DUE TO END ON 27 MARCH. THERE WILL ALSO BE ANOTHER MSXDEV TO LOOK FORWARD TO. READ THIS COLUMN TO KEEP UP WITH IT ALL! </INTRO>

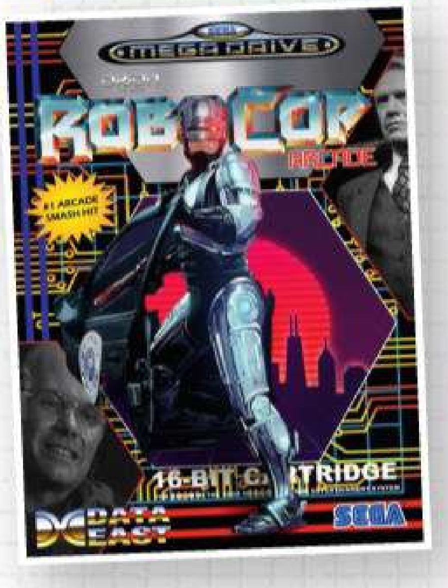
<MAIN HEADER>

ROBOCOP RETURNS

<INTRO> AFTER ISSUE 240'S ROBOCOP COVERAGE, THE CLASSIC ARCADE GAME IS REACHING NEW PATROL AREAS ON AMIGA AND MEGA DRIVE </INTRO>

<BODY> **"I played a lot of *RoboCop* in arcades in the late-Eighties," explains Retro Encoder (@RetroEncoder on Twitter).** "I knew the tricks to earn more points with the boxes and shooting the points in the third and fourth stages. I also finished it with one credit. When I got my Sega Genesis in the Nineties, I really wanted an arcade version of *RoboCop* for it, but it never came." As a result he's now developing a new port. "I use Microsoft's Visual Studio, C++ and the SGDK," he says. "The most difficult things are converting arcade sprites to the Genesis colour palette and remaking map tiles to fit VRAM." Interestingly, no changes will be made. "My plan is to develop a faithful arcade port," he says. "I do not intend to release this port on a cartridge, as I believe the community makes its own cartridges." There is box artwork to print out in the classic Sega style, which has been created by Yan at *System Gamer Magazine*. Retro Encoder is also looking forward to the forthcoming Amiga version.

"I don't think the original Amiga version did the hardware any justice," says Daniel Allsopp of his AGA remake, adding, "I just wanted to learn 68000 assembler, and do something meaningful whilst learning. My only memories of playing the arcade game were on holiday in Mallorca when I was probably 10 or 11." Daniel is hoping it will be a nice companion piece to Ocean's games. "There are differences in the home versions which I do want to include, for example, the alleyway shoot-out, and the photo e-fit sub-games. Some of the prologue phrases were a bit… oddly worded so I've changed those slightly to make it read better," he adds. "I've also added a few things to the intro sequence, like the fourth directive and some moody music from Amiga *RoboCop 3*. There's also a nice cutscene before the level loads of the newsreaders explaining about the riot on downtown main street. Gameplay will obviously have to change slightly too, the arcade was easy to complete so long as you kept threading coins into it – but that's not going to work with a home version, so I'll have to think about that a bit."



ART CREDIT: YAN @ SYSTEM GAMER MAGAZINE

ROUSING REMAKES

THE SIMPSONS ARCADE
(Mega Drive)

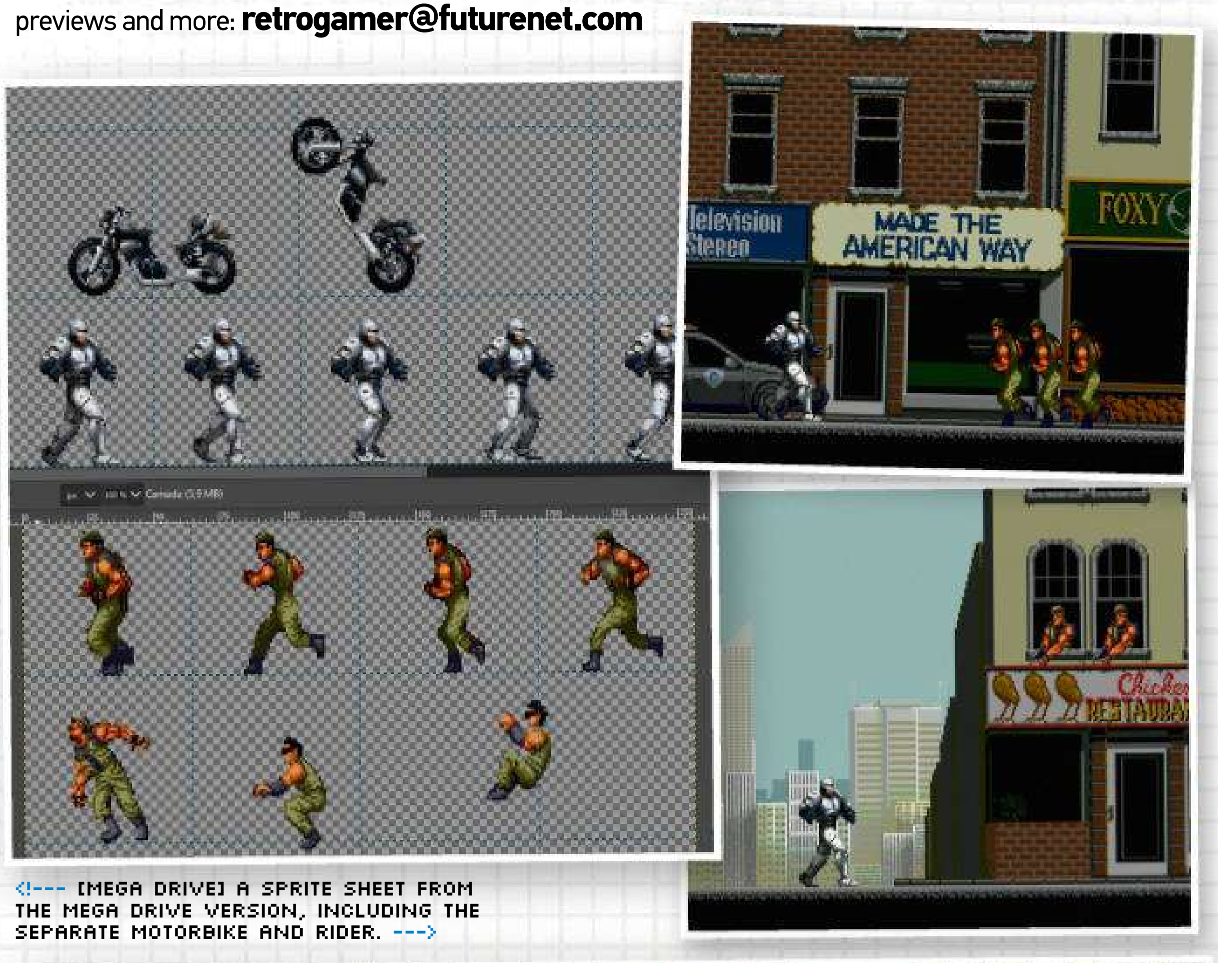
< Ray Castello and his team are working on a remake of this Konami side-scrolling beat-'em-up. We'll be interviewing Ray on these pages soon. />

TURRICAN 2 AGA
(Amiga)

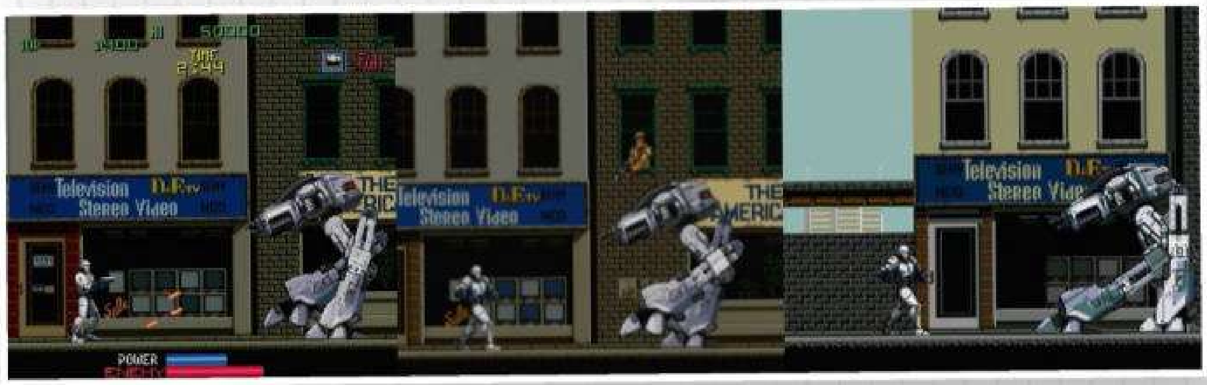
< Daniel Allsopp is looking forward to this one, as it's based on the MS-DOS version. The Amiga board thread includes a demo. Bit.ly/eab-turrican2 />

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**



<!--- [MEGA DRIVE] A SPRITE SHEET FROM THE MEGA DRIVE VERSION, INCLUDING THE SEPARATE MOTORBIKE AND RIDER. --->

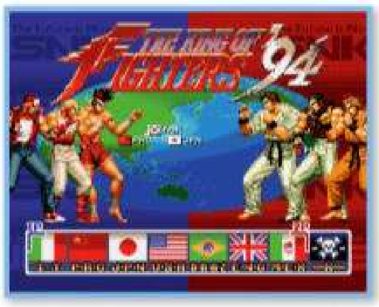


<!--- THE MENACING ED-209 ENCOUNTER ON (LEFT-RIGHT) ARCADE, AMIGA, AND MEGA DRIVE. --->

A physical release looks unlikely, though. "I would love a physical release; I see all the other new Amiga homebrew releases being offered in glossy boxes and with real floppy disks so that would definitely be nice to have." Daniel is aware of the copyright issues potentially surrounding the release though. "I have no idea what would be involved here; on one hand, I doubt anyone cares about the Amiga anymore but then *RoboCop* is still a high-value money-maker for someone so it might get shot down straight away." If these conversions do stay out of copyright trouble, look forward to playing them soon. </BODY>

<!--- DANIEL ALLSOPP IS MAKING A NEW AMIGA VERSION OF ROBOCOP. --->

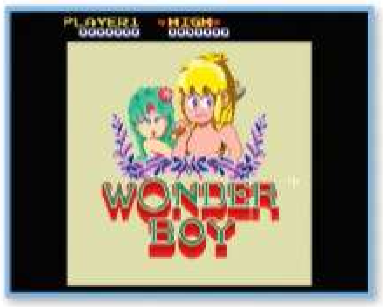
<INTRO> MORE INCOMING REMAKES TO LOOK FORWARD TO </INTRO>



THE KING OF FIGHTERS '94

(Mega Drive)

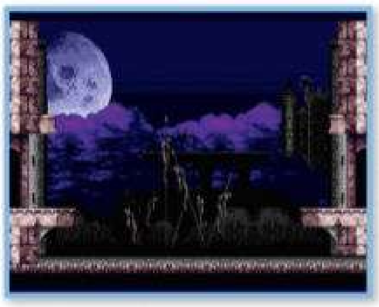
<Daniel Moura has been sharing artwork on Twitter from potential SNK remakes for Mega Drive using the Blaze Engine, including this select screen. />



WONDER BOY

(Amiga)

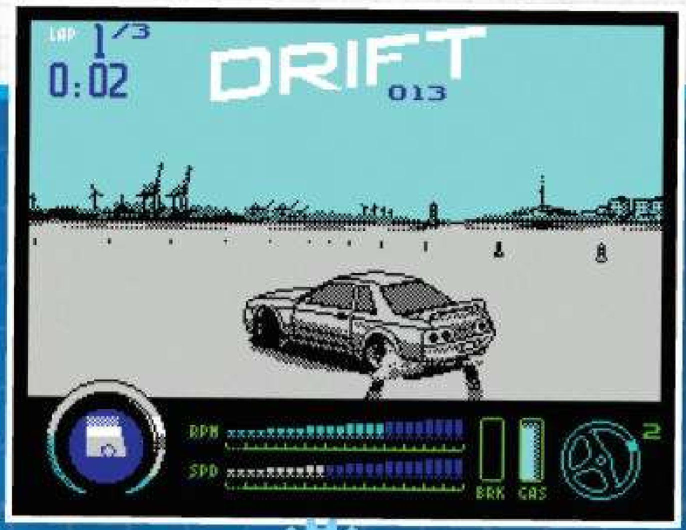
<Work is continuing on this AGA conversion, being built in the Scorpion Engine. Acidbottle has about "50% complete" with a demo at bit.ly/wbaga-demo />



CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

(Mega Drive)

<Pigsy's latest YouTube dev diary has revealed the two-player mode, and a ROM showing parallax scrolling. />



NEWS BYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

<**Amiga:** Matze1887 gave Amiga owners a treat with the massive platform game *Minky,* featuring 28 levels and playable on a stock Amiga. Find it at bit.ly/minky-amiga />

<**Atari 7800:** An impressive conversion of *1942* flew in, supporting YM music on the Dragonfly cart, or POKEY music for Concerto users. It's at bit.ly/1942-7800 />

<**Atari ST:** Dr Floyd released a playable demo of the massive sci-fi RPG *Cosmos Chronicles,* inspired by the classic *Ultima* games. Head to bit.ly/cosmos-st-demo and give it a try. />

<**C64:** *New Lands* by Magic Krol is a strategy game where you build colonies and defeat pirates. Try it at bit.ly/newlands-c64 />

<**PICO-8:** Paul Hammond's latest reimaging is *Beamrider* (pahammond.itch.io/beamrider) while Morning Toast brings us *Invader Overload* (morningtoast.itch.io/invader-overload) cleverly using backgrounds from the recent TweetJam. />

<**PLUS/4:** TCFS, Unreal and Csabo strike again with the conversion of *Raid Over Moscow,* complete with the infamous hangar scene. bit.ly/raid-plus4 has what you need. />

<**Various:** Haplo has released *Tenebra 2* for Plus/4 and C64 and is now converting the original *Tenebra* for ZX Spectrum. Find it at h4plo.itch.io />

<**ZX Spectrum:** Zoysa updated its 2019 game *Drift* to become *Drift 2K22* (top image), with a new competition and new cars at bit.ly/drift2k22 Daniel Isoba updated his 1986 game *Pac-Hic* to become *Pac-Hic Rehab* (for 128K machines), with both versions being included in the download from danielisoba.itch.io/pachic Finally, Team Moritz unleashed the Halloween game *Johnathan – Trick Or Treat,* with clever sprites based on famous Spectrum people. It's at bit.ly/jonathan-trick />

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

CHAMPION CODER

ALASTAIR LOW

<INTRO> ALASTAIR LOW'S HOMEBREW GAMES HAVE REACHED A WIDER AUDIENCE, THANKS TO EVERCADE AND PLAYDATE </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: SCOTLAND WEBSITE: LOWTEK.GAMES FORMAT: NES, PLAYDATE RECENTLY GAME: FLEA, TAPEWORM DISCO PUZZLE WORKING ON: PLAYDATE EXPERIMENTS />

<!--- ALASTAIR LOW'S HOMEBREW CAREER STARTED WITH THE GAMES FACTORY AND SOME UNRELEASED MEGA DRIVE TITLES. --->

HOW HAS DYSLEXIA AFFECTED YOUR GAME-PLAYING AND PROGRAMMING GAMES?

<Being dyslexic has really affected my gaming life. I stayed more in the NES era over SNES as the games were less wordy. On the creation side, my main problem was reading the documentation which was usually text; I've recently got a screen reader which I couldn't imagine living without. The spread of YouTube tutorials has helped. When something breaks, the first thing to check is if I've spelt variable names the same. />

WHAT DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT DO YOU USE?

<NESmaker for *Flea*, then C and NES lib for *Tapeworm*. I've played around with GBStudio and have been impressed with what you can achieve with no coding experience. />

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH FLEA?

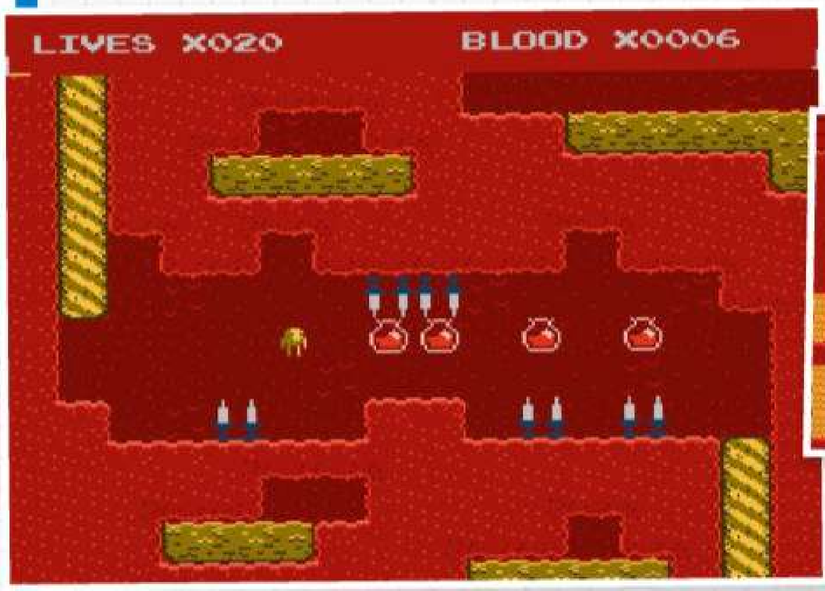
<From mobile games like *Temple Run*, where you always run and then must jump. I liked the idea of the reverse, always jumping and you must control movement. Fleas are underrepresented in games; pixels are small and so are fleas, so it could zoom out and see the bigger picture. I would like to expand the *Flea* universe with more genres and bring new twists to familiar mechanics. />

WHAT PROMPTED THE NESTEK AND NES TO DREAMCAST TOOLS?

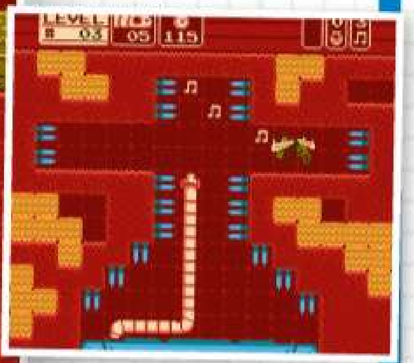
<There was no easy way to publish NES games to Steam or Dreamcast. I commissioned a programmer friend to make it an easy reusable solution that anyone can use. I'd love to do the same for Playdate too. />

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH EVERCADE AND PLAYDATE?

<I liked the idea of Evercade. After seeing the *Mega Cat Collection*, I connected with a bunch of devs; we formed a Discord chat that grew and became the *Indie Heroes 1* cartridge. The inclusion of *Tapeworm* on *Indie Heroes 2* was a given. Playdate was more of a passion project. I'm enjoying learning Lua through smaller projects and am going to build more stuff for it. />



<!--- [DREAMCAST] THE NES TO DREAMCAST TOOL HELPED FLEA LEAP ONTO SEGA'S CONSOLE. --->

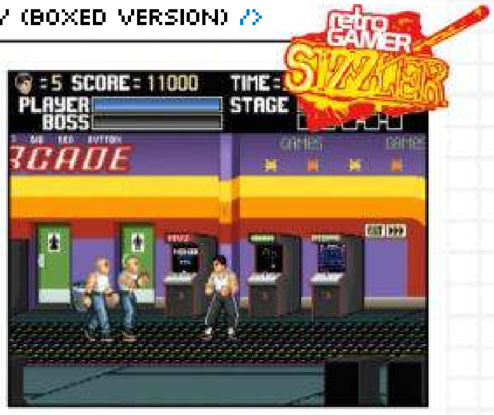


<!--- [NES] WIND THE WORM BACK AND FORTH TO COLLECT THE MUSICAL NOTES IN TAPEWORM DISCO PUZZLE. --->

DATA BURST

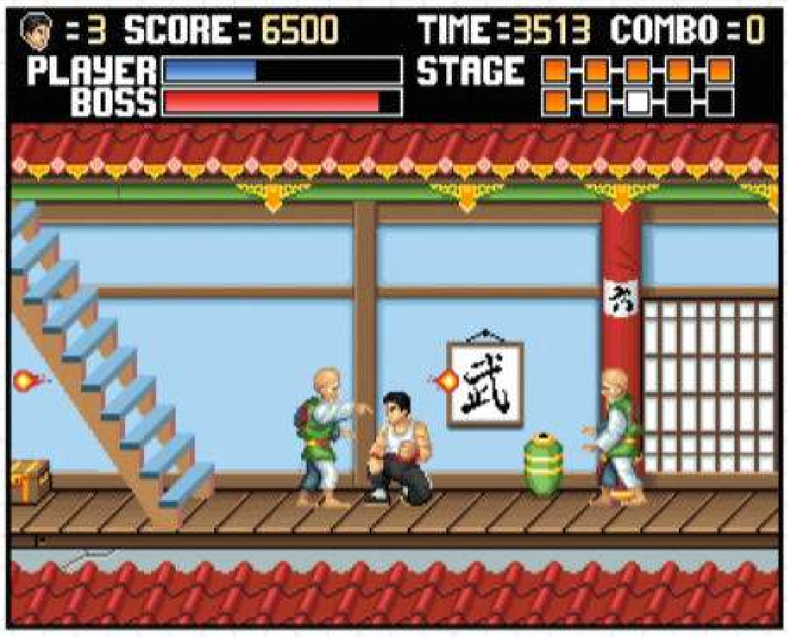
DEVIL'S TEMPLE – SON OF THE KUNG-FU MASTER

<INFO BY: MCGEEZER, TENSHU, HOFFMAN, NO9, DJ METUNE FORMAT: AMIGA (MINIMUM A500 WITH 0.5MB SLOW RAM) PRICE: £14 (DIGITAL) / £42 (BOXED EDITION) VISIT: BIT.LY/DEVILSTEMPLE (DIGITAL) GEEZERGAMES.CO.UK/ (BOXED VERSION) />



<BODY> **Three years after Thomas defeated X at the Devil's Temple (in *Kung-Fu Master/ Spartan X*), his son Tommy must now save his girlfriend Lena from X's clutches.** The first five levels pay tribute to Irem's *Vigilante*, with Tommy kicking and punching his way through the streets, the subway, and an arcade to reach the temple. Enemies will grab you and must be shaken off before they drain your precious energy. Hidden bonuses include food to restore energy and weapons (knives and nunchucks) to help you fight back. The next five stages see Tommy fight through the Temple itself to reach X, featuring many familiar baddies from the original *Kung-Fu Master* and tough bosses to defeat at the end of each level. There are also three bonus rounds, with Tommy kicking balls for additional points. After an impressive opening animation, the menu gives a choice of three difficulty levels, music or sound FX and the option to start at any stage. The animation throughout is superb, and the backgrounds are filled with plenty of detail. The great music has familiar themes from the arcade games remixed, and some excellent effects. It is tough, even on the Easy setting, but it's hard to stop playing. This is another superb title from Graham Cowie and the team. </BODY>

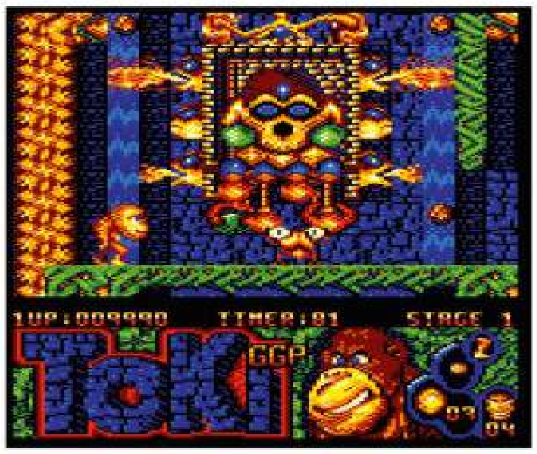
SCORE: 90%

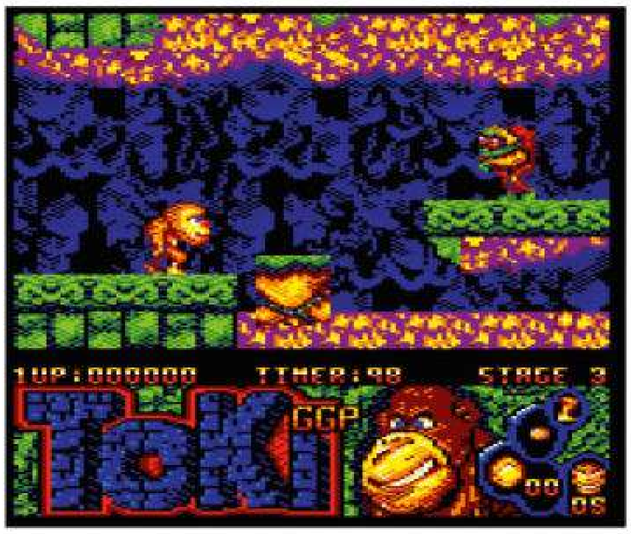


<!--- [AMIGA] DAMN IT, WE'VE ALREADY DONE THE 'EVERYBODY WAS KUNG FU FIGHTING' REFERENCE THIS ISSUE. --->

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**


1UP:009990 TIMER:81 STAGE 1
TOKI
GGP

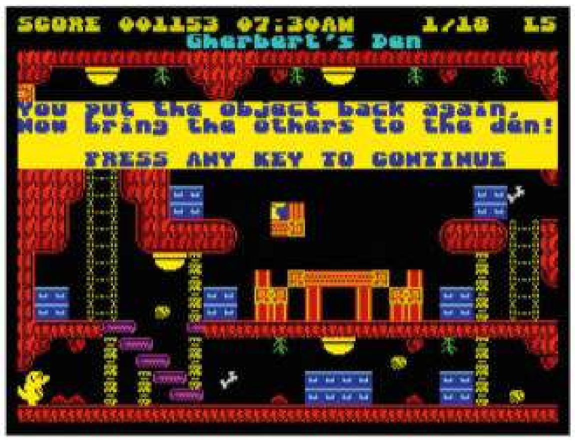

1UP:000000 TIMER:98 STAGE 3
TOKI
GGP

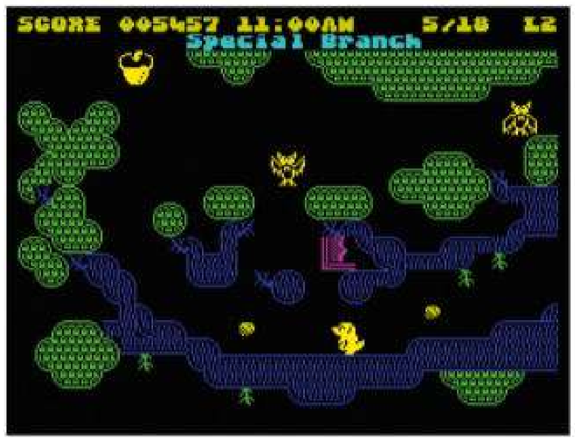
TOKI

<INFO BY: AMSTRADGGP (MAITREJOE, JACK) FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC PRICE: FREE (DIGITAL DOWNLOAD) VISIT: AMSTRADGGP.COM />

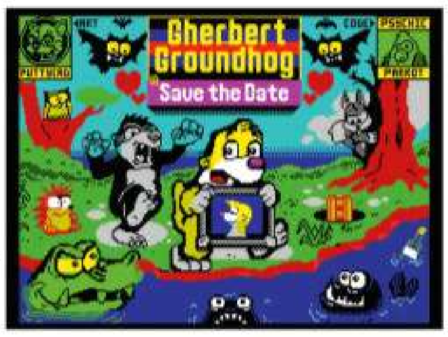
<BODY>**As the princess is abducted during *Toki*'s intro, she says, "Don't make 30 years this time," referencing how long it has taken the Amstrad to receive a conversion of the arcade hit.** There are many familiar baddies and hazards to tackle, but Toki can spit at them and use power-ups, including his flaming breath. Certain enemies will drop coins, and collecting ten earns an extra life. Just be sure to watch out for *Toki*'s tough bosses. This is very well-presented, from the choice of language to the in-game score panel. The graphics are well-made and colourful, with decent scrolling for the machine, while excellent music and sound effects help drive the action along. Amstrad owners should not miss this, and other users should play it too. </BODY>

SCORE: **88%**


SCORE 001153 07:30AM 1/18 15
Gherbert's Den
You put the object back again.
Now bring the others to the den!
PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE


SCORE 005457 11:00AM 5/18 12
Special Branch

GHERBERT GROUNDHOG IN SAVE THE DATE


Gherbert Groundhog
Save the Date

<INFO BY: PSYCHIC PARROT & PUTTYCAD FORMAT: ZX SPECTRUM PRICE: $2.00 (DIGITAL) VISIT: BIT.LY/GHERBERT1 />

<BODY>**The jealous critters have stolen everything from Gherbert Groundhog's burrow, and he has a date at 8pm.** Now he must find everything and bring them back one at a time, dodging the falling acorns and patrolling animals along the way. This is classic flick-screen platform fare, with great cartoon-style graphics and decent sound (including a very jolly title tune). There is plenty of variety in the screens, the controls are responsive with the option to redefine keys, while a ticking clock adds extra pressure. It's an entertaining game that we really enjoyed. </BODY>

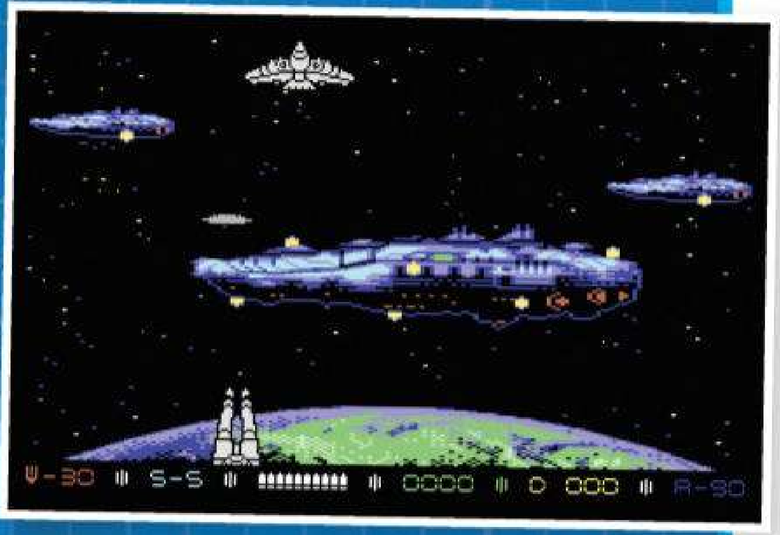
SCORE: **84%**

PROCESSING

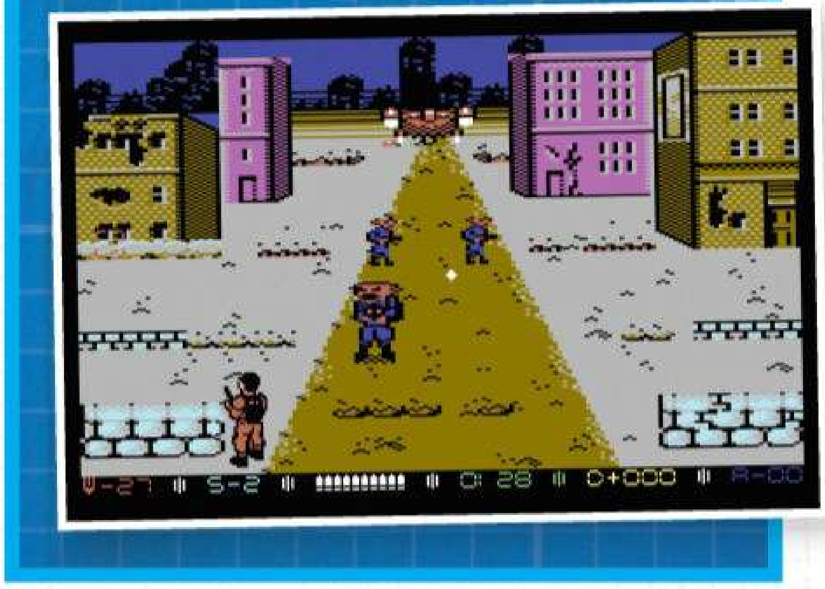
<INTRO> LEARN HOW ICON64 DREW INSPIRATION FROM SOME CLASSIC EIGHTIES GAMES FOR ITS BRAND-NEW C64 RELEASE </INTRO>

<BODY> ***Terrestrial* is in final testing as we get the chance to play through its many varied stages.** Design and graphics are by Trevor Storey, the coding is by Stuart Collier while Saul Cross handles sound. There are heavy influences from two classic Access games – the controversial Cold War title *Raid Over Moscow* and the earlier *Beach-Head*. Launch your rocket from the orbiting satellite, shoot down enemy fighters and then bombard the motherships.

A third-person viewpoint is used when flying down canyons, which is reminiscent of *Buck Rogers – Planet Of Zoom*. There's also a *Cabal*-style section where you destroy buildings and shoot aliens. Tanks then negotiate the hazard-strewn battlefield, and there's a big shield generator to destroy. Trash three generators and you fly on to the main city, where you must destroy the base with its massive cannon, take on the droids defending the final chamber and defeat the alien brain there in order to triumph. This is shaping up to be another excellent C64 cartridge and disk release for Psytronik – more at bit.ly/terrestrial-preview </BODY>


V-30 S-5 0000 0 000 A-90

<!--- [C64] LIKE BEACH-HEAD, SHOOT DOWN THE ENEMY SHIPS BEFORE DESTROYING THE LARGER ONES. --->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SPECTACULAR SPORTS GAMES

The team goes all Grandstand for an issue

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

What's not to love about sports games? Familiar rules make them easy to pick up, they don't require actual exercise and they even let you live out wild fantasies like Spurs winning the Premier League, so we got together to share the games in our personal Halls Of Fame.

NICK

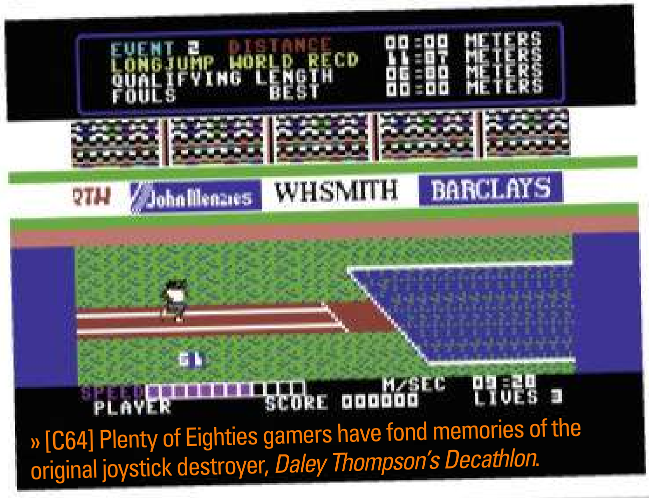
Sports games seem to get a bit of a hard time from retro gamers – they're often seen as the preserve of casual players, and little more than shelf-filling fodder today. But I'm sure we have some fond memories of sports games, right?

DARRAN

Absolutely, I placed *International Superstar Soccer '98* in my Top 25 N64 games that I wrote for Games Radar and don't regret it for a second (it made ninth place).

TIM

I had great fun with *Summer*, *Winter* and *California Games*. They were all pretty good, aside from the ice-skating one – I never could get a good score. Years later I found out you were supposed to perform every trick while facing backwards first.


EVENT 2 DISTANCE 00:00 METERS
LONGJUMP WORLD RECD 11:07 METERS
QUALIFYING LENGTH 06:00 METERS
FOULS BEST 00:00 METERS
JohnMenzies
WHSMITH
BARCLAYS
SPEED
PLAYER
SCORE 000000
M/SEC
09:20
LIVES 3

» [C64] Plenty of Eighties gamers have fond memories of the original joystick destroyer, *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*.

REPLAY
BRUTAL DLX
SCORED
004
12
026

» [Mega Drive] It doesn't matter that *Speedball 2* depicts a fictional sport, it's a staple of the genre.

DARRAN

Funnily enough I've been enjoying *Summer Games* and Winter Games myself as I've been playing them on the latest Evercade cartridge. My fave is definitely *California Games*, particularly on the Master System. Were you a fan of that series, Nick?

NICK

Oh yeah, I love those kinds of multi-event games. I've got *Winter Games* for the C64 and *California Games* on the Master System, not that owning it helped me when we played it in your shed one evening.

TIM

The loading kind of sucked though, I might have to invite myself round to your shed Darran and have a go on the Evercade.

DARRAN

Well you now have to deal with the fiddly virtual keyboard, but it works OK, Tim. Did anyone get swept up in the *Madden* craze when it first hit Mega Drive? I remember being obsessed with EA's various sports games at the time and I don't even like sports!

TIM

Yeah I went through a phase around then too. *FIFA*, *NHL* and *Madden* on the Mega Drive. I wasn't very good. I just used the C button on *FIFA* and always went for the Hail Mary play on *Madden*. I don't know why.

NICK

My dad had *Madden* but I found it a bit too complicated as a young kid, I preferred *EA Hockey* which was on the same cart. I got an ex-rental copy of *Madden NFL 94* a few years later and loved it. We used to play loads of *FIFA* too.

DARRAN

Those early *FIFA*s certainly seemed to get everyone pumped, but if I'm honest none of them could hold a candle to *Sensible World Of Soccer*, what a game that was. I still play it on my Xbox 360.

TIM

I had that on the Amiga, great game. Did anyone else ruin their Quickshot joysticks on *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*? Eventually I turned the joystick upside down and waggled it from there. It was much easier.

DARRAN

I saw many a joystick ruined by the *Daley Thompson* games. While we're on the subject of multi-event sports games again I'd like to mention *Hyper Sports*, *Track & Field* and the many great home conversions that were available. I used to love watching *First Class* when they did the

NIK
KAWASAKI
640
1 FOR 3 -- NOT AWESOME...
SPEED
ANGLE

» [Master System] Nick's still bad at *California Games* – it took ages to catch the disc for this screenshot

» [Mega Drive] EA's sports empire was well earned – 16-bit *Madden*, *NHL* and *FIFA* games were all phenomenal.

skeet shooting and long horse events. That was great fun.

NICK

We used to have *Decathlete* at my local sports centre, which I had great fun with. I also really like some of the oddball ones like *Numan Athletics*, where you have to throw missiles and push trains. Did you guys enjoy any of the more unusual sports games like that?

DARRAN

I remember getting into *Cosmic Smash* for a while (although I've long since sold it). *Windjammers* is obviously great fun and I've also got a soft spot for *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* as I recently picked it up for the Mega Drive.

TIM

Speedball 2 was amazing. I liked it when sports went extreme in the Nineties and Noughties with stuff like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, *Mat Hoffman Pro BMX*, *Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer*, *Dave Mirra* and the *SSX* series.

DARRAN

Great shouts, Tim. I used to love *Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer* on Xbox. The GBA version is surprisingly good as well. I never got into the *SSX* games or *Dave Mirra*, but I did love the *Tony Hawk's* releases, particularly *2X* on the Xbox. Games like *Aggressive Inline* and *BMX XXX* did nothing for me though.

NICK

It's amazing how far that genre came from the *Cool Boarders* series – I played the second one on PlayStation Classic recently and it felt very clunky.

DARRAN

I never liked *Cool Boarders*, but *1080° Snowboarding* and Amped were superb. What about golf and boxing games, we've not mentioned either yet!

TIM

Yeah I played *Barry McGuigan World Championship Boxing* on the C64. And *Ready 2 Rumble* and *Fight Night* later, but threw in the towel when *FaceBreaker* came out. I hate golf by the way.

NICK

I don't care for golf as a real sport, but *Neo Turf Masters* is one of my favourite multiplayer games, and I really enjoyed *Golf Story* on the Switch a few years back. *Super Punch-Out!!* is brilliant, and coming off that I got drawn into some of the *UFC* games over the years too.

DARRAN

I can't believe we've not covered wrestling games yet. Oh wait, wrestling isn't a sport. Zing! *

> "I just used the C button on FIFA and always went for the Hail Mary play on Madden"
>
> **TIM EMPEY**

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

» [Amiga] *SWOS* doesn't need loads of commentary or Ultimate Team – just high speed and crazy curling shots.

P2:INSERT COIN(S)
REST 100y
4 378Y PAR 4
WIND
LOW
NICE
HIGH
STANCE
CLUB
SW·100Y
SHOT·POWER
LEVEL-4
CREDIT 00

» [Neo Geo] *Neo Turf Masters* is as good a multiplayer game as any Neo Geo fighter.

21546
1:36
FS ROCKET TAILSLIDE +
KICKFLIP + MANUAL + JAPAN AIR
2273 X4

» [PlayStation] Extreme sports games like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* often had excellent soundtracks too.

3RD/6
00:00:42
23566
9780
+70 STYLE BONUS
20%
62 MPH
UBER TRICK

» [GameCube] Who cares about realism if you can pull off *SSX 3*'s outlandish Uber Tricks?

ON ME HEAD, SON!

Which sports games keep you coming back year after year?

retrogamer

They may not hold up for most, but my nostalgia for *Super Action Baseball* and *Super Action Football* on the ColecoVision is really what keeps these in rotation for me. So many fond memories of playing these with my dad and brother while using those huge multi-buttoned controllers.

Aaron Wren

Tecmo World Cup 90 is not the greatest football game by any stretch but it will always be the greatest football game to me. A nostalgic arcade classic.

Christopher Richards

Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge. After 34 years, I will still find time to play this. I was crap at it to begin with but my father was brilliant at it. I can't think about this game without thinking about him.

Dave Williamson

I used to love *Tony Hawk's* years ago. It was a PS Plus game a few months ago, I replayed it and it was still a lot of fun. I introduced my 12-year-old son to it and we really enjoyed taking turns finishing the challenges together, quality time.

Null Ray

When my son was around five or six I showed him *Tecmo Bowl* and he spent a LOT of hours playing it. For some reason it resonated with him even though he was solidly a member of the Switch generation.

Tobias Jensen

Capcom's *Gold Medal Challenge* on NES is still one of the best videogames ever made of the Olympic Games. Where else can you find Marathon as an event?

Chun Wah Kong

Baseball Stars 2, the greatest baseball game ever made.

Binni Erlingsson

Tiny Toons Acme All-Stars. My kids took a liking to it when they were young and we sometimes pick it up for laughs. It's actually a fine game.

David Haywood

I still enjoy firing up *Bobsleigh* for the Amstrad CPC from time to time. It's nothing remarkable, but for early 3D it holds up well.

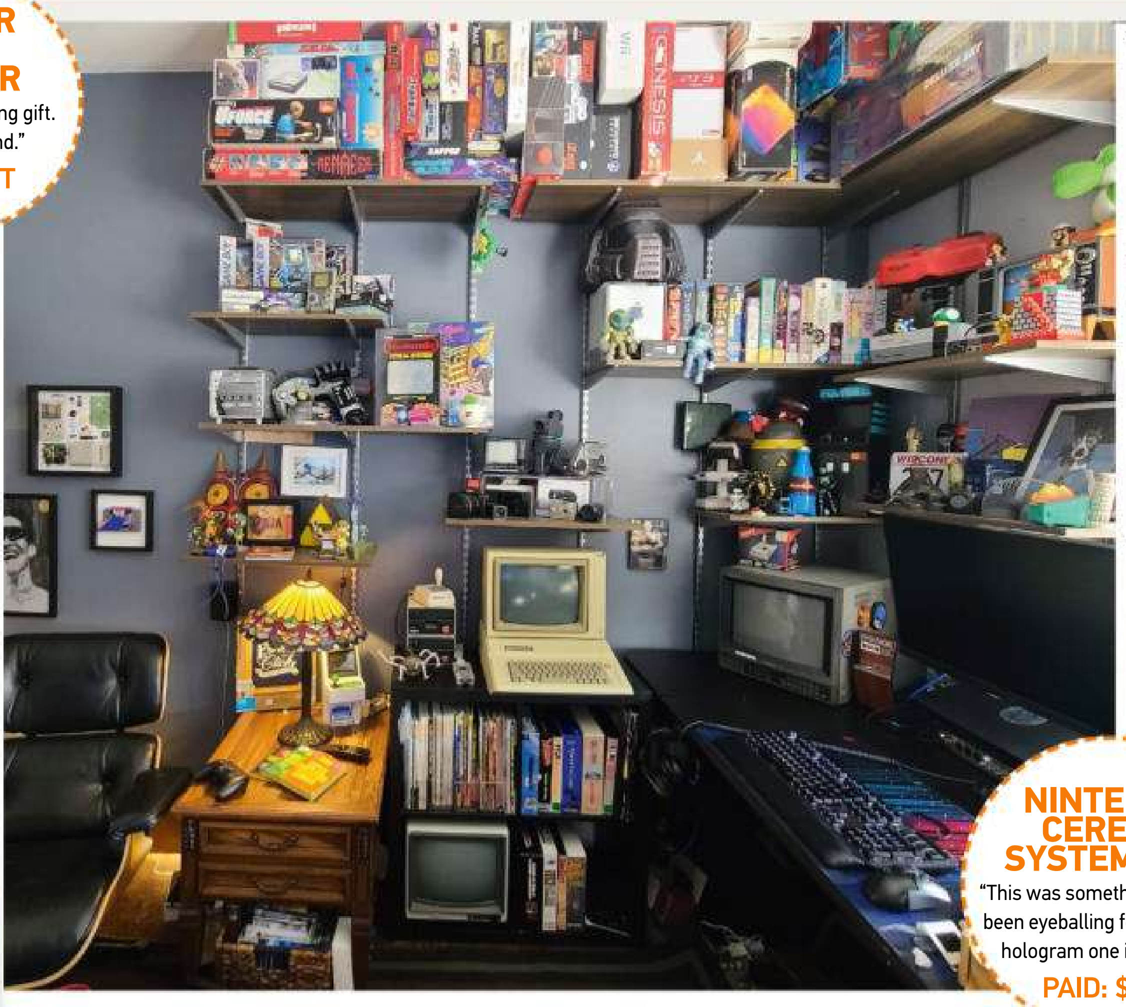
Paul Sunderland

Hyper Sports for the win, loved it in the arcade and the C64 conversion was ace.

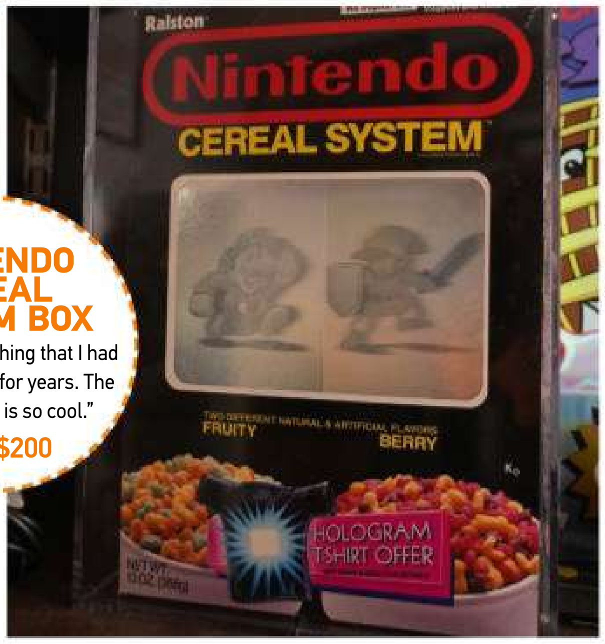
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**

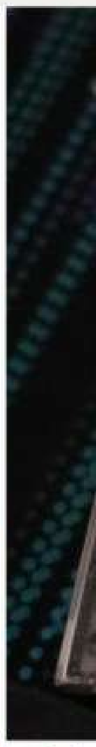
PERLER BEAD BOWSER
"This was a wedding gift. It's one of a kind."
PAID: GIFT



EARTHBOUND
"I got this as a gift from my wife when we were dating."
PAID: GIFT



NINTENDO CEREAL SYSTEM BOX
"This was something that I had been eyeballing for years. The hologram one is so cool."
PAID: $200



OFFICE SPACE

Our latest collector's room is for both work and play

BIO

NAME:
Nick Mantzoros

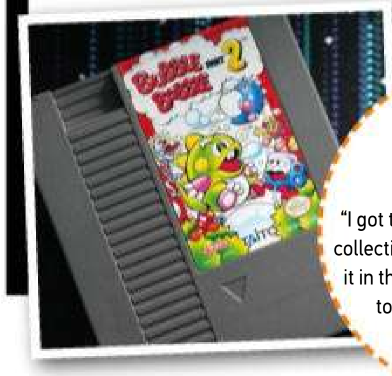
LOCATION:
Illinois, USA

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
At least $10,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
NES

FAVOURITE GAME:
Mega Man 2

YOUTUBE:
@SuperNicktendo



BUBBLE BOBBLE PART 2
"I got this as a capstone to my NES collection. I had been on the hunt for it in the wild for years and decided to bite the bullet on eBay."
PAID: $220

If there's one thing we're aware of as remote workers, it's the need for space. Our latest collector, Nick Mantzoros is no different and moving house during the pandemic meant he had to be quite practical with his new games room. "We bought right as COVID was starting to affect things so originally the room was to be a gameroom/YouTube studio," he says. "We now work remotely full-time so I needed to arrange the room in a way that I could work and then play after work."

Many gamers tend to simply rely on shelves to store their precious videogames, but Nick's need for a balance between work and play means he's been a little more inventive with his approach to storing his collection. "One thing that I have learned over the years is that there's only so many ways you can display individual games," explains Nick. "I got a credenza (under the TV) which stores all of my disc-based games (PS2 and newer). Each drawer has a different system. So PS2, GameCube, Wii U, Switch, etc. The middle door opens up and contains handheld games and Saturn and power/AV cables."

In addition to solving storage issues, there's a practical element to how Nick houses his games as well. "Storing games away also protects them from the light," he continues. "As the value of these games increase the light damage becomes an increasing concern. I also just wanted a unique setup. No one really puts games in drawers but I wanted space to create themed shelves that I can swap out at any time. Get sick of the *Zelda* shelf? Swap it out for things in the closet and now my collection looks different."

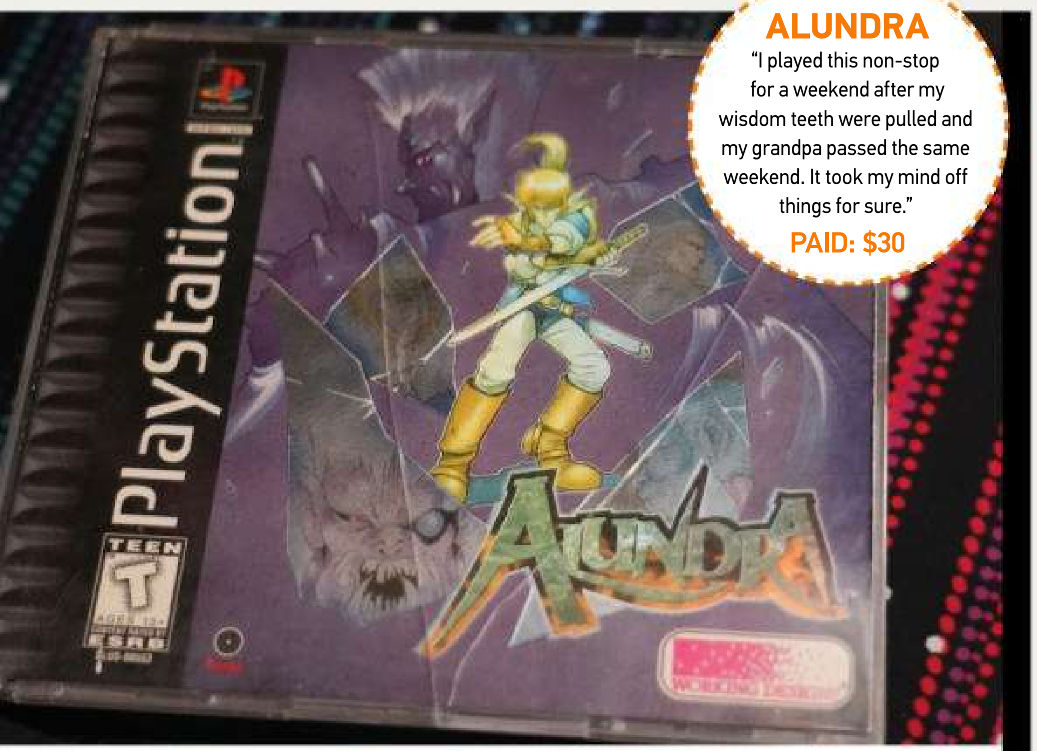
Regardless of how many times Nick changes his shelves and drawers around, one thing that won't change is the sheer amount of Nintendo-themed stuff he has, which started off as a friendly competition with a friend. "I started collecting in about 2003 – I originally set out with my friend Dave to collect the top 25 NES games," he says. "We could still find them at Gamestop and local stores. The most expensive game that I had in my collection was the first *Mega Man* which cost me $20. Then I just started branching out from there. Just collecting things from my childhood and building a collection over time."

That collection has grown to cover everything from the Saturn to the Master System and Atari Lynx, but Nintendo remains dominant throughout Nick's collection. "I have a lot of Nintendo games because that's what I grew up with," he admits. "Their games just feel right to me, especially the ones that I grew up with as a kid."

Nick feels that attachment is important, particularly when first starting out. "Take time to think about what and *why* you really want to collect," Nick says. "I have 1,000 games in my collection and I feel it's curated to my tastes. If you try to collect everything all at once, you're going to go broke and you're going to not have any attachment to anything in your collection." Sound advice, particularly if you're dealing with the same space constraints Nick has. ✱

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com



ALUNDRA

"I played this non-stop for a weekend after my wisdom teeth were pulled and my grandpa passed the same weekend. It took my mind off things for sure."

PAID: $30

CUPHEAD
Nintendo
SPIDER-MAN REMASTERED
JAGUAR
ATARI

PlayStation
SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO
CAPCOM

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

■ "This was my friend Dave's copy. He passed away 15 years ago and we always played this. If I ever get rid of it all, I'll keep this."

PAID: GIFT

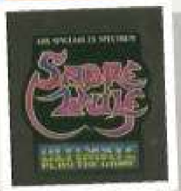
BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: TURTLES IN TIME

Loose carts of the NTSC versions range from **£30-£60** with complete copies hitting as much as **£200.** Mint PAL copies can reach **£1,000,** making *The Cowabunga Collection* a far cheaper alternative.



SABRE WULF

If you fancy experiencing Sabreman's first Spectrum adventure it's still easy to do so. Complete boxed editions rarely sell for more than **£25** and we've sometimes seen it go for as low as **£6.**

FIGHTIN' SPIRIT

The low sales of *Fightin' Spirit* means it fetches high prices today. If you can get a complete Amiga disk version for under **£170** consider yourself very lucky.

ZERO WING

This entertaining Mega Drive shmup is rising rapidly. Complete Japanese editions can top **£157** in mint condition (possibly due to it not receiving a US release). PAL versions can reach **£48** complete.

1080° SNOWBOARDING

This slick N64 game still sells at a decent price. Complete PAL copies range from **£10-£25** while the NTSC editions rarely pass **£25.**

LEGO STAR WARS: THE VIDEO GAME

The game that defined Lego's later games costs no more than **£3** on PS2. If you want to experience the GBA release you'll be paying **£15-£20** instead.

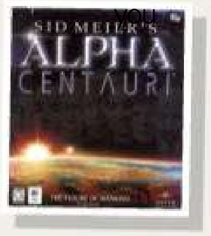
URIDIUM

Hewson's best-selling game has several variants on C64 so here's your guide to the more interesting ones. The Rack-It label starts at **£5** and can reach **£15,** while the disk edition usually reaches **£40.** If you want the double-pack with *Paradroid* you'll get little change from **£100.**

WIPEOUT PURE

This excellent futuristic racer remains nice and cheap. If you spend more than **£10** on it you're doing something wrong.

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI



This classic strategy gem from the minds behind *Civilization* won't cost the world. The big-box edition can be found for under **£20** while the numerous re-releases never top **£5.**

HOW MUCH?!

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES II: THE ARCADE GAME

Here's a price that will leave you shell-shocked! Five eager collectors pushed the price of this sealed non-graded NES game to an astonishing **£2,355.01.** No wonder *The Cowabunga Collection* is so popular at the moment.

Prices correct at time of print

MEETING THE MASTER

Nick explains his enduring love for the Master System

When I realised when this issue would hit shelves, I just knew I had to write about the Master System. You see, it will be almost 30 years to the day since I received Sega's 8-bit console – the first gaming machine that was ever bought just for me. It was the machine that had me thanking my mum over and over all day, and the one that she thought she'd blown up during setup, as she rolled the TV unit over a balloon. It was the machine I wanted for *Sonic*, that would go on to introduce me to *Alex Kidd*, *Wonder Boy*, *Golden Axe*, *Out Run*, *Rampage*, *Double Dragon*, *R-Type* and so many other classics.

Of course, you'll know that the Mega Drive was out by this time and that *Sonic 2* was flying off shelves, so it might seem quaint that I was so excited by my gift. Circumstances meant that was the best I was going to get – my parents had divorced and my mum was raising two kids on her own, so the Master System was a huge stretch for her in a way that I didn't understand at the time. For most of the year that followed, she'd make weekly trips to Littlewoods to pay off the machine in instalments. I was no stranger to the joys of 16-bit gaming as my dad had bought a Mega Drive earlier in the year, and while I would have loved to have had the latest system, I was genuinely overjoyed to have any new machine.

My mum was an absolute hero long after that too. She never viewed gaming as a waste of my time, and she would regularly browse the shelves of Future Zone looking for games that had been mispriced by even £1 – an amount that absolutely made a difference to us back then. She's never been a gamer though, and always had to guess at what I would like. Occasionally that meant that I would end up with something like *The Cyber Shinobi* because I liked playing *Shinobi*, but I can still remember her surprising me after school with games like *Rampart* and *Robocop Vs The Terminator*, both of which I came to love.

The great thing about living in a poor area was that the Master System was actually the perfect choice. Plenty of my friends had Master Systems of their own, so it was easy for us all to lend and borrow games and experience way more than any of our families could afford. I never owned *Road Rash* or *Mortal Kombat*, but my friends did and in return they got to play the likes of *Lemmings* and *Desert Strike*. The fact that companies were still releasing such big-name games ensured that I never felt like I was missing out – at least for the first couple of years.

> "The Master System was actually the perfect choice"
>
> **NICK THORPE**

I had never experienced the decline of a console before, and for a while I'd see Game Gear games like *Sonic Triple Trouble* and assume they were coming to my console too. I'll never forget the reality check I got upon seeing, "Stuff all (Sorry!)" listed in the Master System section on the cover of *Mean Machines Sega* one month. Fortunately I still had plenty to keep me going even though new releases were dwindling, as friends and family would pass on their old stuff when they chose to upgrade – including the hardware, which is why I have so many Master Systems.

I was finally gifted a Mega Drive in the summer of 1997, just months before its final game came out, and months after the UK arrival of the Nintendo 64. But I never lost my interest in the Master System, continuing to pick up games and peripherals here and there over the years. These days I have a fairly impressive collection, including a boxed Sega Super System bundle with the Light Phaser and 3D glasses, a boxed Mark III – the Japanese equivalent of a Master System – and about 100 games. Of course I still have that original Master System II as well.

They say you never forget your first love, and there will always be a place in my heart for the Master System. The formative experiences I had on that console shaped my gaming tastes for decades to come, and owning it when I did taught me that you don't need the latest hardware to have fun. I fully expect that in 30 years time, as I'm on the cusp of becoming a pensioner, I'll still be playing it. *

FIVE FAVOURITES

Nick's pick of the Master System pack

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
It wasn't the Mega Drive game I knew, but I quickly grew to love its unique levels and music, as well as its higher difficulty.

COLUMNS
This is a great version of the puzzle classic, thanks to Flash mode and the highly competitive two-player mode.

ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD
Miracle World is great too, but this crossover classic is the best of Alex Kidd's games and a wonderful platformer.

WIMBLEDON
An odd choice? Maybe, but I spent untold hours on this surprisingly good tennis game back in the mid-Nineties.

WONDER BOY III: THE DRAGON'S TRAP
Like *Final Fantasy VII*, this is a game that I enjoyed so much that I couldn't leave it at home when we went on holiday.

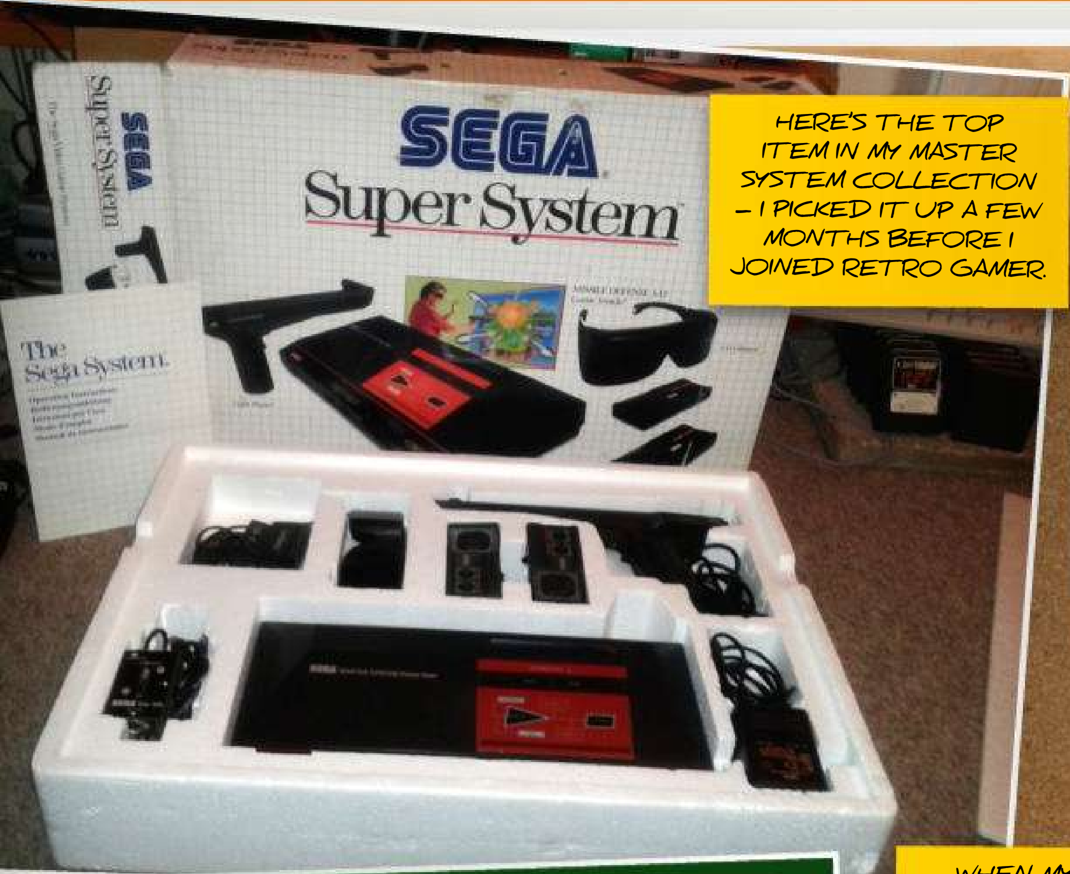
SEGA
Master System II

THIS IS IT – THE MOMENT I GOT THE MASTER SYSTEM II. A PIVOTAL LIFE EVENT, TO BE SURE.

DAD WAS CLUED IN ON MY BIG GIFT FROM MUM, SO HE WAS ABLE TO GET ME SONIC AS HIS GIFT.

NEXT
TIME
01M09S
LEVEL 1

[MASTER SYSTEM] MY SISTER ISN'T A HUGE GAMER, BUT SHE DOES LIKE PUZZLE GAMES AND WE ENJOYED PLAYING COLUMNS TOGETHER.



HERE'S THE TOP ITEM IN MY MASTER SYSTEM COLLECTION – I PICKED IT UP A FEW MONTHS BEFORE I JOINED RETRO GAMER.

WHY CAN'T I HOLD
ALL THESE MASTER SYSTEMS!?
imgflip.com

TWITTER USER GTOMEGA_ BRIAN MADE THIS MEME AFTER I TOLD THE STORY OF MY MANY MASTER SYSTEMS ON SEGA'S TWITCH CHANNEL.

[MASTER SYSTEM] SONIC WAS A FAIR BIT TOUGHER ON THE 8-BIT CONSOLES, BUT WHEN YOU CAN'T AFFORD MANY GAMES, THAT HELPS.

ZAXXON
SEGA MARK III
COMPUTER TV GAME

WHEN MY HOLIDAY TO JAPAN WAS CANCELLED IN 2020, I DECIDED TO BRING SOME JAPAN TO THE UK.

SCORE 564960
TIME 58
SPEED 293

[MASTER SYSTEM] WITH NO LOCAL ARCADE, THE MASTER SYSTEM GAVE ME MY FIRST EXPOSURE TO MANY CLASSIC GAMES.

[MASTER SYSTEM] THINKING BACK, MUM WAS TERRIBLE AT HIDING GAMES FOR CHRISTMAS, WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY I GOT RAMPART IMMEDIATELY.

[MASTER SYSTEM] HENMANIA WAS WELL AND TRULY ON THE RISE BY THE TIME I GOT WIMBLEDON.

THE IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Readers tell us the first game they'd play with a Super System bundle

Adam Hay
Zelda might be one of the all-time big games series, but let's not forget that for one brief shining moment Sega had a better *Zelda* than Nintendo did. I'd settle in for a nice, long *Golden Axe Warrior* session.

Liam Brooks
Operation Wolf! Always thought it was a gem of a game, plus the Master System port was the best one. The gun was always responsive and the nostalgia would be through the roof.

Classic WWF
Definitely *Gangster Town*. It was the first game I played on the Master System and the game that got me into console gaming.

Paul Lambert
Donald Duck & The Lucky Dime Caper. Absolute masterpiece, one I still play to this day and got my daughter into retro gaming.

Intergalactic Geo
I want to say Phantasy Star, but since I can play that elsewhere and have the glasses, going with *Missile Defence 3-D*. I remember the 3D being pretty good, and I never could beat it. Last line was sobering, "One reached East/West City. That's all it takes. Game Over"

Nick Moudios
Out Run 3D with the 3D glasses. Simply for the joy of being at Coconut Beach. We already had VR in the Eighties.

Billford123
Maze Hunter 3D was mind-blowing. The depth felt like you were looking into your TV, it was like nothing I had ever experienced before.

Retro Jonesy
Either *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World* or *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*. Two of my all-time favourite Master System games which I still play today.

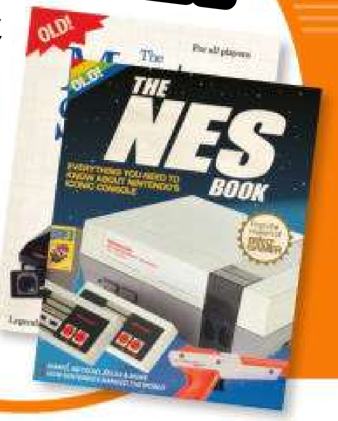
Tony Cruise
R-Type is one of the best versions and a great game.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – **TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of one of our classic retro books. Good luck everyone!



MOTION WOES

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
Over the last several years, I've developed a motion sensitivity which has been limiting my game choices. The trigger is usually map rotation, meaning I can no longer enjoy old favourites like *Silent Hill 2* or *Xenogears*. I haven't completely pinpointed how this sensitivity works, though – for example, I have no issues with *Valkyrie Profile 2*, but I get dizzy after about 20 minutes of *Tombi*. Do you have any advice for those of us with motion sensitivity?
Lex Camelio

We're sorry to hear you are having trouble with some of your favourite games, Lex. While we can't offer any advice, Nick is no longer able to enjoy first-person games like *Mirror's Edge, Doom* or *GoldenEye 007*, so he does sympathise with you.

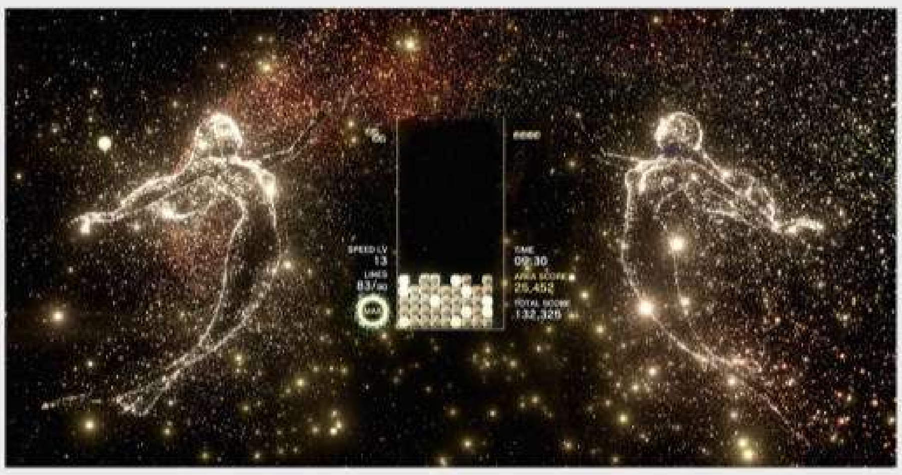
STAR LETTER

A PUZZLING END

Hello **Retro Gamer**,
Am I the only person who feels the traditional puzzle genre is nearing extinction? Sure, there are probably thousands available on mobile, mostly of the match three variety and designed to squeeze every penny out of you, but how often do we see a high-quality console puzzle game these days? Replaying *Pokémon Puzzle League* and *Dr Mario 64* through Nintendo Switch Online reminded me of what we used to have with every release; great visual presentation and soundtracks, a variety of single and multiplayer modes as well as interesting mechanics, and where the genre was heading in the early Noughties before its association with cheap mobile games left its reputation tarnished. There are still a small handful of great puzzle games every generation, many from indie developers, but I really miss the days when puzzle games were held in the same regard as platformers, shooters and RPGs by both gamers and publishers.

Now if you will excuse me, I have a date with *ZooCube*.
Daniel Betts

You're right Daniel, new puzzle games are on the wane nowadays. Still, good examples of the genre do exist, with Nick recommending *Baba Is You*, *Crossniq+* and *Tetris Effect*.



» [PC] Sadly, games like *Tetris Effect* are the exception rather than the rule nowadays for mainstream puzzle games.

» [Xbox] Lex struggles to play games like *Silent Hill 2* now. Can any readers offer them any helpful advice?

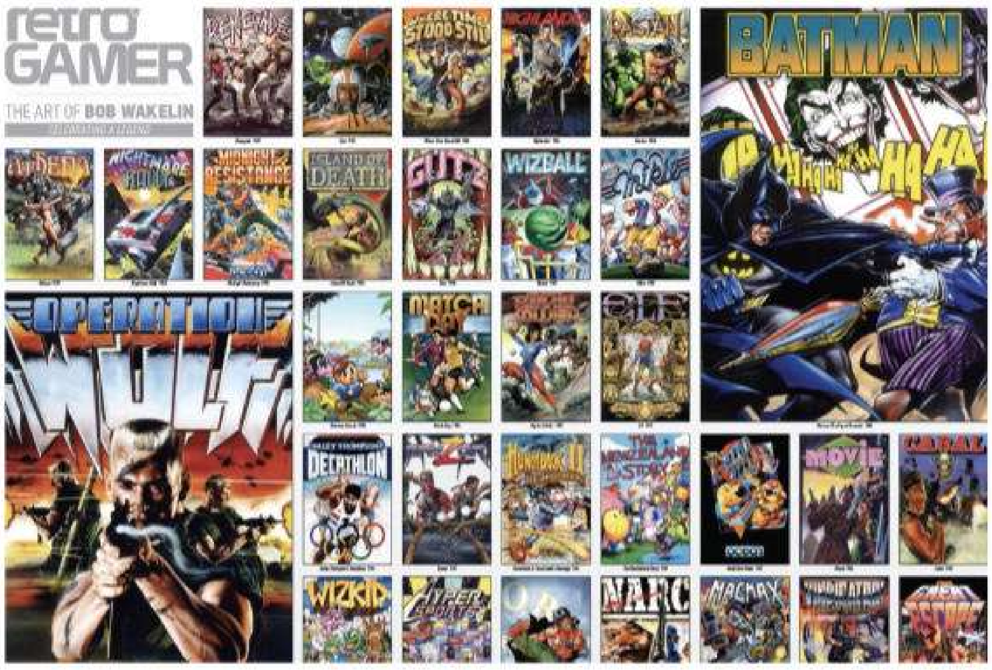
TRIBUTE TIME

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
After the sad death of Oliver Frey this year I was re-reading the *Fantasy Art* book dedicated to all his magazine covers from the Eighties and can thoroughly recommend it to anyone growing up with a Spectrum, Commodore or Amstrad. This reminded me of another artist which brought me so much pleasure each month through his advertisements for Ocean and Imagine Software. Have you ever done an article, or plan to do one on Bob Wakelin. I know he too has sadly passed but his legacy of fantastic artwork is incredible.
Yours sincerely, Andrew Price

We wrote a tribute to Bob Wakelin when he passed, Andrew. If you're able to find it online, issue 179 came with a double-sided poster that featured some of Bob's most memorable illustrations.

CHRISTMAS DELIGHTS

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
Around this time of year, I dig out my Christmas issues of *Crash*



» Our poster from issue 179 featured some of Bob Wakelin's best art. How many do you recognise?

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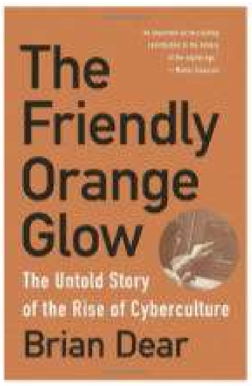
magazine (and **Retro Gamer** of course) and read them from cover to cover. I've been doing this for the last, well, let's say over 30 years, and each year I marvel at just how good those magazines still are. Just looking at the wonderful covers brings a huge smile to my face as I recall those early years of gaming. Am I alone in doing this, or are there other gamers from the early Eighties that also like a healthy dose of Christmas nostalgia?
All the best.
Joel Weaver

» It's no surprise this is Darran's favourite **Retro Gamer** Christmas cover, he features on it, after all.

You're certainly not alone, Joel. While Darran no longer has his old copies of *Amstrad Action*, he still enjoys the Christmas issues we used to run. He also likes to play *Christmas NiGHTS* religiously every year too.

PHILOSOPHY

Howdy **Retro Gamer**!
Since you asked, the obscure machine I'd love to see you cover more is the Plato mainframe. I had such a lovely time reading *The Friendly Orange Glow.* What excited me most was how the nerds at the university would go underground or infiltrate the library just to play games, hence them having nonsensical names like *Pedit5*, *Spasim* and *dnd.* And they were way ahead of their time: 3D graphics, multiplayer worlds and chatting. I would love to learn more!
All your base,
Robert August de Meijer



» If you've not read it, Robert recommends *The Friendly Orange Glow.*

We've not really covered the Plato mainframe in any significant way, Robert. Leave it with us and we'll see what we can do.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Christmas Games

Every year the team likes to put games aside to play over the Christmas break and this year is no exception. Andy is going to christen his new PC with *Skyrim*, Tim is planning to complete the remake of *Resident Evil 2*, while Nick hopes to spend time with *Kirby And The Forgotten Land.* Darran has asked for a Mega Drive Mini 2, so he can revisit all the Mega-CD games he can no longer justify buying.

Your say

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite Turtles game?

» [PC] *Turtles In Time* was a popular choice, but this year's *Shredder's Revenge* has also struck a chord with readers

Tim Shrimpton
Having played *The Cowabunga Collection* freshly, I think it might actually be *TMNT III: The Manhattan Project* on NES. Although it's vying against the modern *Shredder's Revenge.*

Lee
The *Turtles In Time* arcade game is my favourite. The graphics were gorgeous then and they still look stellar now.

Member of Public
Shredder's Revenge. It takes some of the best bits of the previous games like lobbing the enemy at the screen and feels like *Streets Of Rage.*

Gord to the G
TMNT: Fall Of The Foot Clan for Game Boy. It was my first *TMNT* game and it was just fun! Yes, there were gameplay problems, but being able to play as my favourite turtle (Raphael) more than made up for them.

Bay Area Retro
Turtles In Time is my favourite without a doubt. It's hard to think of a game I've replayed more and it will always stay in my gaming rotation!

Rob Rankin
The original coin-op followed by *Turtles In Time.*

Kellen Lynch
The original NES game. The utter insanity that is that game, along with its infamous difficulty level, makes it a legend.

James Harvey
Tournament Fighters! Fighting games with licensed characters was such a cool novelty back then.

Jason-Cameron
Turtles In Time on the SNES. To this day it's still one of the best side-scrolling beat-'em-ups. It has aged incredibly well in my opinion.

Jason Williams
Turtles In Time on the SNES. I love the Mode 7 effects.

JC3
Shredder's Revenge added a lot of depth to the formula. The constant call backs to the comic and show are outstanding. It's the best game in the franchise.

GC
I am gonna break the usual replies here and say that the *TMNT* game based on the 2007 movie is more than a decent action platformer game (similar to a *Prince Of Persia* title).

Fridaynightgamenight
I love *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Hyperstone Heist!* So many great memories of playing it with my brother. Solid gameplay and the music in my opinion was better than *Turtles In Time!*

Roo Cumner-Price
I'll always love the NES game, even though it's brutally difficult and unfair.

retro GAMER

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PURE VALUE

» PSP » 2005 » STUDIO LIVERPOOL

It has largely been forgotten now, but there was a lot of uncertainty about the PSP in the run up to its launch, with particular concerns over battery life and screenshot authenticity. Many of my friends at the time were sceptics, but I couldn't help feeling the hype when I saw *WipEout Pure* – I was drawn to the idea that I could take one of my favourite game series anywhere, with stunning good looks and the kind of soundtrack that I'd come to expect of it. When I finally got it, it was everything I wanted it to be.

In fact, it was even more than I wanted it to be. I was happy with the content on the UMD, with eight new tracks, four classics and four for Zone mode, but then there were sixteen more tracks that you could download, along with new teams and even extra music. Keeping all of those packs installed certainly bumped up the loading times a bit, but the new stuff was every bit the equal of the main game content, with Ubermall and the fantastically nostalgic Altima VII being favourite tracks of mine. The Omega League tracks were pretty odd, having been designed by various artists without the game's aesthetic in mind, and the Pure Urban tracks wouldn't have stayed installed even if they didn't cause a crash on Exostra Run, but it would have been churlish to complain as everything was free of charge.

I know that the idea of being excited about DLC seems totally ridiculous now, as it is largely considered to be another way for publishers to wring every last penny out of a player, but *WipEout Pure* offered a truly generous package and I had naively hoped it would set the template for how DLC would be handled in the future. I guess that's the one thing about the PSP that really was too good to be true. *

9.5 SECS BEHIND
AL LAP!

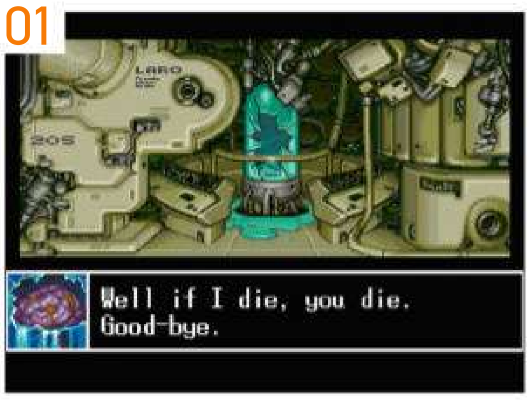
ENDGAME

MEGA DRIVE
STREETS OF RAGE 3
24 MEG
SEGA

STREETS OF RAGE 3

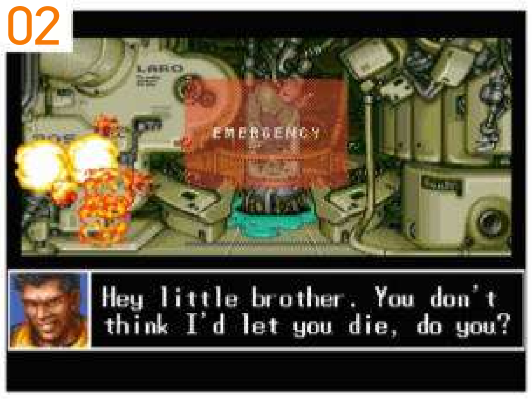
» It may have the most decisive soundtrack of the series, but there's no denying that the core combat that takes place in the third *Streets Of Rage* game is rock solid. But what happens when the dust settles, you've saved the chief and you've beaten the final boss within a strict time limit? Let's find out, shall we?

01


Well if I die, you die.
Good-bye.

» When he had his mech suit Mr X's brain was a right evil sod, killing with impunity and cancelling Tuesdays like the Sheriff Of Nottingham. Without it though, he's just a snivelling mass of pathetic grey matter.

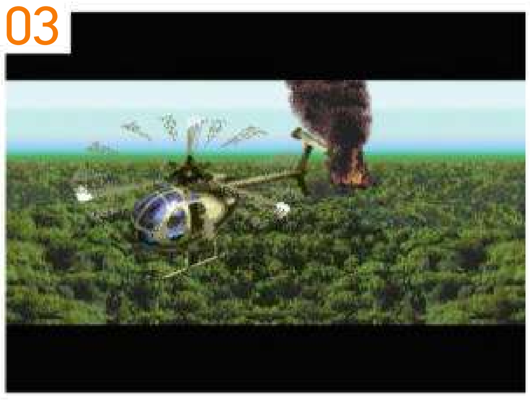
02



Hey little brother. You don't think I'd let you die, do you?

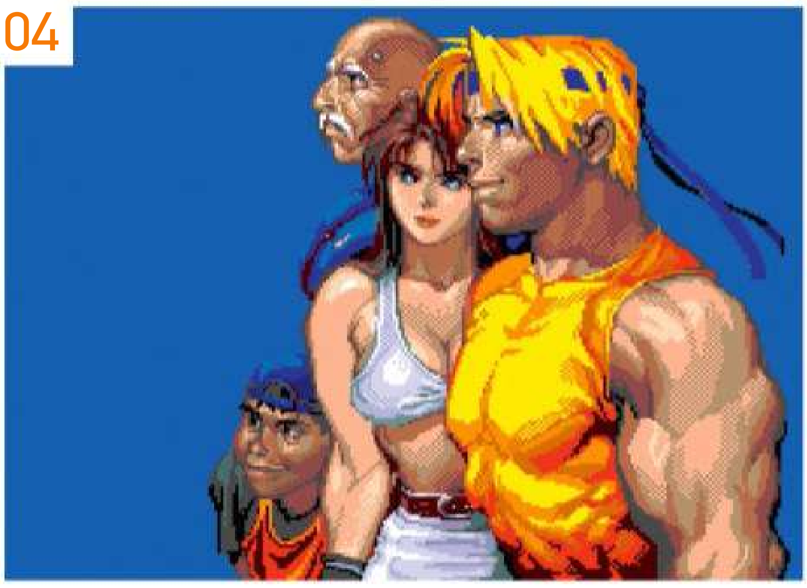
» He's still a complete dick, mind, and threatens to bomb everyone into oblivion. When it looks like the end is nigh, Adam breezes in to save the day. You know, the guy no one liked using in the first *Streets Of Rage* game.

03



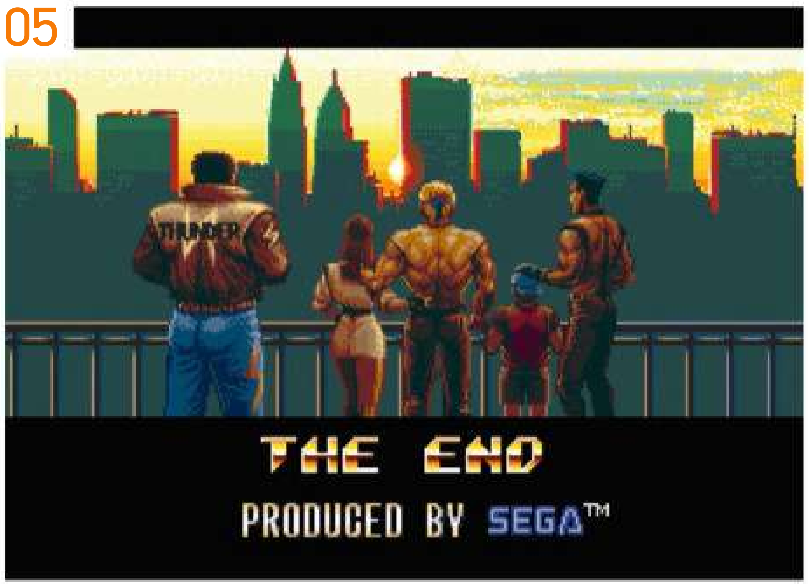
» Adam may be a bit slow and clumsy in a fist fight but he certainly knows how to make a extremely fast getaway. The team escapes in a handy helicopter while Mr X's brain disintegrates into a million soggy pieces. Yuck!

04



» Every game needs a dramatic hero shot to finish on and *Streets Of Rage 3* is no exception to the rule. "Hey," Adam angrily exclaims to the others, "you wouldn't even be posing like that if I hadn't saved your miserable asses."

05


THE END
PRODUCED BY SEGA™

» If this was a Nineties action movie that comment would cause everyone to laugh and things would then end on a freeze frame. It isn't, so you'll have to simply settle for the team admiring a cool sunset instead. How sweet.

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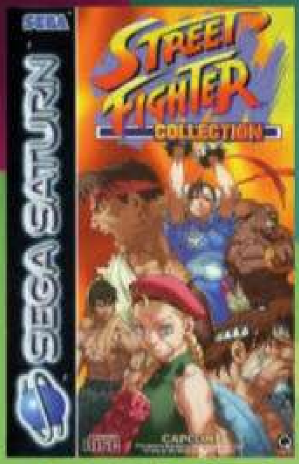

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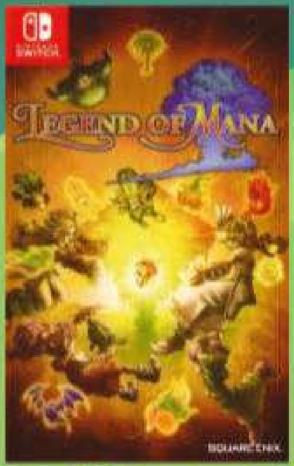

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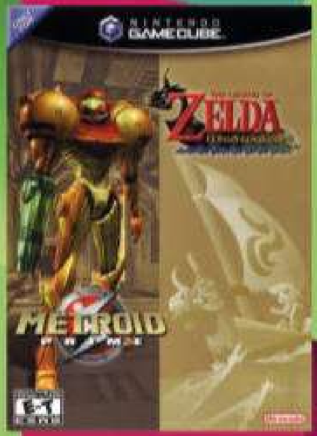

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